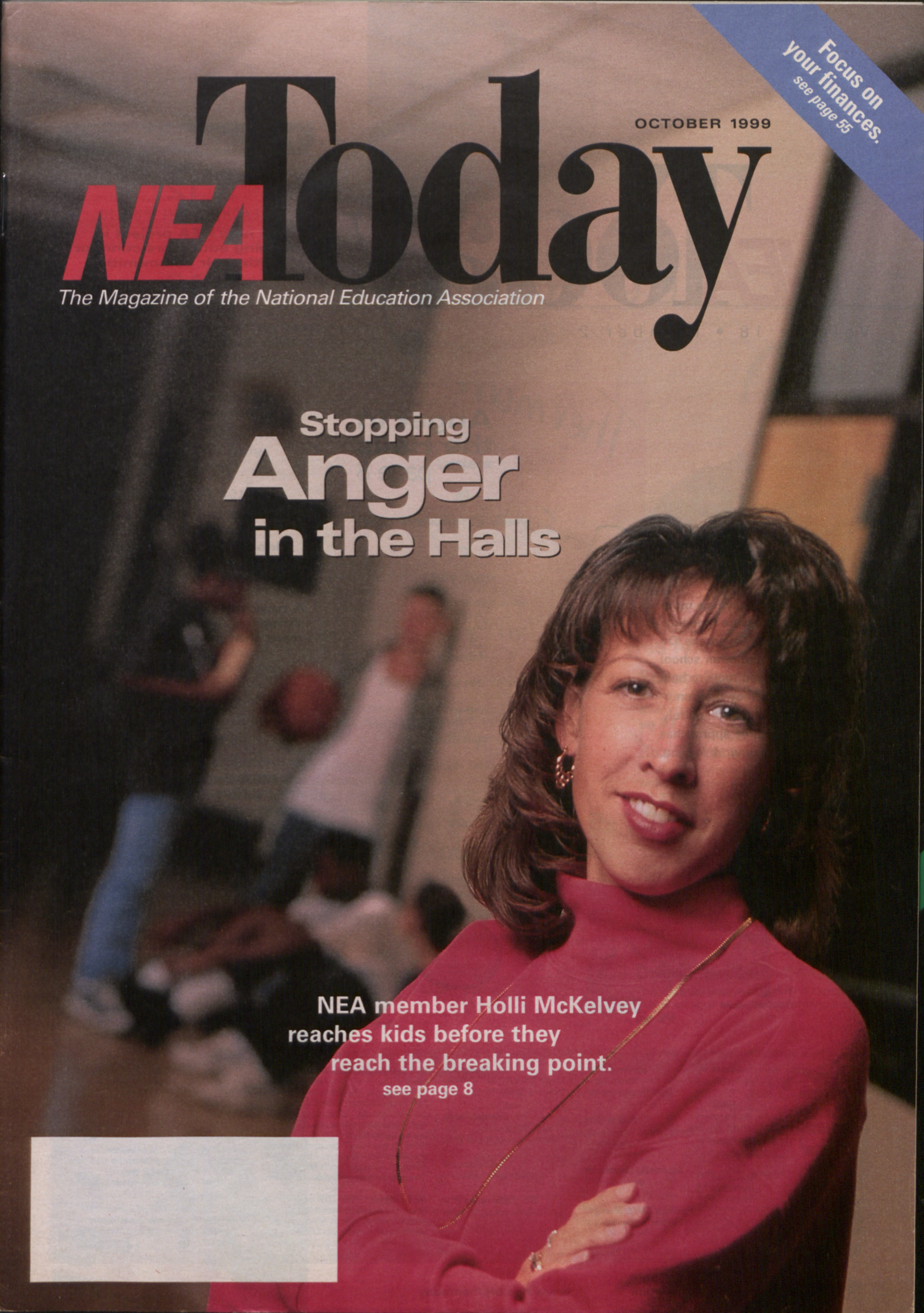
OCTOBER 1999

NEA Today

The Magazine of the National Education Association

Focus on your finances.
see page 55

Stopping Anger in the Halls



NEA member Holli McKelvey reaches kids before they reach the breaking point.
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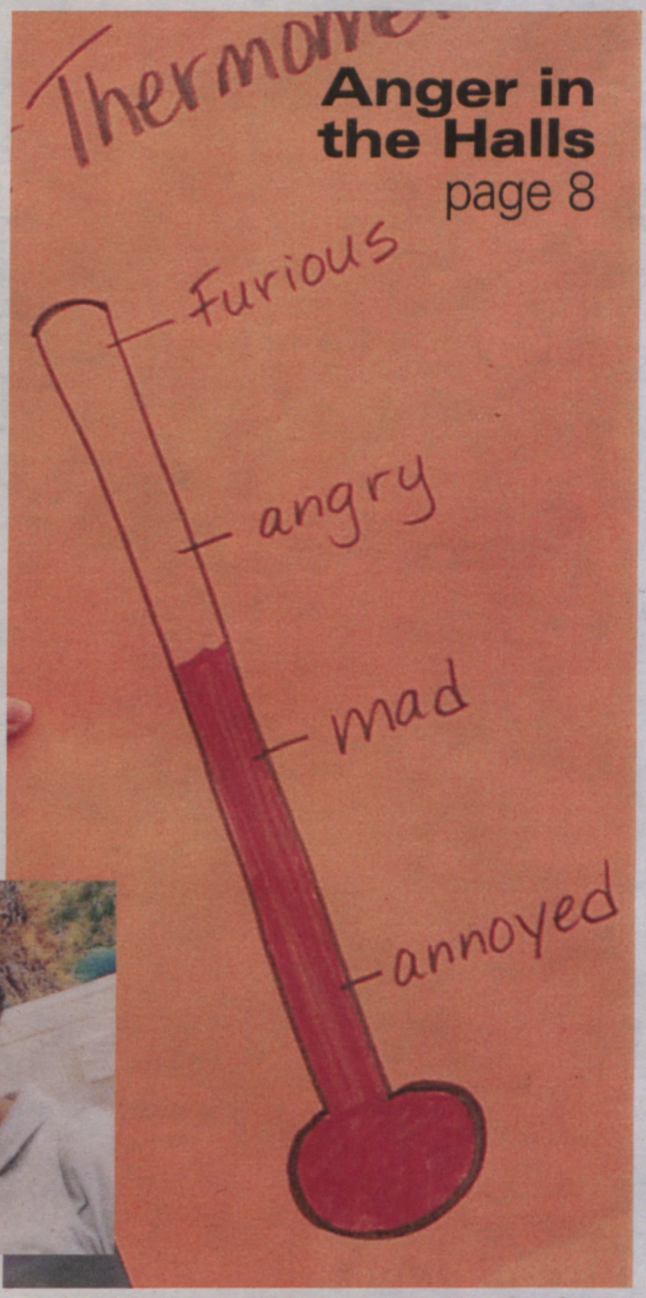
NEA Today

Volume 18 • Number 2



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COVER STORY

Do kids today face more emotional pressure than kids yesterday? Perhaps. Do teachers and other school staffers need tools to help students keep their emotions in check? Absolutely. We share three approaches that may work for you.

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Scott Suchman

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Scott Suchman

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Letters

STUDENT STRESS

While your article "Easing the Strain of Students' Stress" (Health, September) has great information, it carries the wrong title. The article appears to be a pitch for school psychologists.

Realistically, school psychologists are unavailable to students and staff. The school support staff who are readily available to students, staff, and parents for assistance in times of stress are school counselors.

School counselors teach all of the coping skills discussed so well in the article—problem-solving, conflict resolution, anger management, resisting negative peer pressure, and many more.

We're very grateful for the expertise of school psychologists during crisis situations and as consultants, but school counselors are the everyday support for students, educators, and parents.

Bertha Haas
Hermiston, Oregon

TAKING ISSUE

Reading your September issue, I once again find myself asking why people who should know better have allowed a fine word like technology to refer only to computers (Cover Story). In its well-established and still relevant definition, technology means the application of science, especially for industrial or commercial purposes. The teacher who uses a VCR or an overhead projector is using technology; for that matter, so is the teacher who uses a pencil. As sending this via E-mail should indicate, I am not computer-phobic. But as an English teacher, I do care about words. Let's not let this one become needlessly restricted.

Robert Pingree
Concord, New Hampshire

HIGH TECH TIME

I enjoyed reading your pros and cons concerning education and technology. We have to inculcate technology into our classrooms whenever feasible for the greater good of students who will face the new century probably filled with fierce competition. There's a wealth of knowledge on the Web and a number of tools designed for education. This includes free online grading programs for teachers (www.ericsp.org/lesson.html) and countless news sites filled with pertinent information. The analogy that the Internet is much like walking rhrough a city is valid. You always need to pay attention to your surroundings.

Sam Ferman
Danville, California

BAD BOYS

It is disappointing but not surprising to read the idiotic psychobabble William Pollack spews forth as insight (Interview, September). First, it is disappointing because Pollack does not understand boys at all, although he is sadly expert in the foolish and harmful "self-esteem" approach to bad behavior prominent among therapists since the 1960s.

He also mistakenly claims that boys are taught the so-called "boy code" when, in reality, boys are not taught to be boys, they just are. Nevertheless, good boys don't bully others. Bad boys do!

I thought I would fall off my chair laughing when I read that bullies and class clowns are saying, "I need help. Notice me. Do something before it's too late." Yeah, right! Second, seeing this kind of nonsense in *NEA Today* is not surprising, given the dominance of liberal ideology in American education today. The corrosive effects of leftist dogma have recently been manifest in places such as Pearl, Mississippi, and Littleton, Colorado.

Greg Moss
Diamond Bar, California

DILEMMA DISCLAIMER

I'm absolutely appalled by Dan Wells's response to the "Dilemma" (September) about helping a student who is the target of relentless teasing. Mr. Wells's plan for dealing with this issue is nothing shy of dangerous.

Wells suggests that it's the victim who needs to change, rather than the students doing the attacking. He suggsts that a verbal contract be developed for the victim to change his behavior, so as to avoid ridicule and teasing.

Ultimately, the class, minus the victim, is informed of the provisions of the contract and is asked to support the victim's efforts to change—a better word for this would be "conform." If we have learned nothing else from Columbine, it's that we need to work at accepting differences and to avoid making students feel alienated and disenfranchised from the school community.

How in the world is this ludicrous plan going to make any student feel emotionally safe? How can any student under this plan learn to become a better human being?

Under no circumstances should any individual—regardless of wardrobe or attitude—be teased. We need to teach our students how to treat every human being, without exception, with respect and dignity.

Ann Berger
Davenport, Iowa

SCHOOL COMPUTERS

The September "Debate" on computers in the classroom vs. computers in a lab setting was presented well by both sides, but, in truth, this should not have been an either/or situation.

Given only one option, I would choose the classroom. Only in that setting could the technology be integrated into lessons on a daily basis. Having to march kids to a "special" room that you have to reserve in advance is both inconvenient and artificial.

The lab is an excellent place to teach necessary computer skills to an entire class at once. But maintaining just that type of an environment is controlling and counterproductive to the teaching-learning process.

Ideally, both would be available in all schools.

Neil Gordes
Rocky Hill, Connecticut

Our elementary school had the choice of having a computer lab with 15 computers or each classroom adding one computer to its existing one or two. Our staff has never regretted the choice of a lab.

The chance to present programs with the use of a projection device that can be clearly seen by everyone is a far better choice than having a class huddled around a computer or straining to see a small television screen. The chance for immediate practice after learning a new skill is far better than having to wait for a turn. The additional computer would never let 15 teams consisting of second and fifth graders work together to develop a hyperstudio project in two one-hour lab sessions.

I find it very easy to teach and introduce new programs using our curriculum. My students were introduced to a draw program with an assignment to draw food chains. Hyperstudio projects always reflect areas of study. Spreadsheets were introduced with surveys students had conducted and results were published with graphs created with the same program.

We have found our lab to be a very valuable resource for students. As with any teaching tool, there are many different results based on how teachers use the facility.

Mary Hendon
Muskegon, Michigan

BUFFETT BACKER

I must admit that I had a good laugh when I picked up my September 1999 *NEA Today* magazine and read the "Heroes & Zeroes" column that referred to Jimmy Buffett's (you should spell his name right) recent song "Math Suks."

As an avid Parrot Head, all I can say is somewhere along the line, we need to find a sense of humor.

It's a shame you don't investigate your subject matter a little further. If you did, you would find out that Jimmy is very supportive of education in this country, particularly in the field of geography.

None other than John M. Fahey, Jr., the president and CEO of the National Geographic Society, personally thanked Mr. Buffett for being a "guerrilla advocate of geography education through your songs."

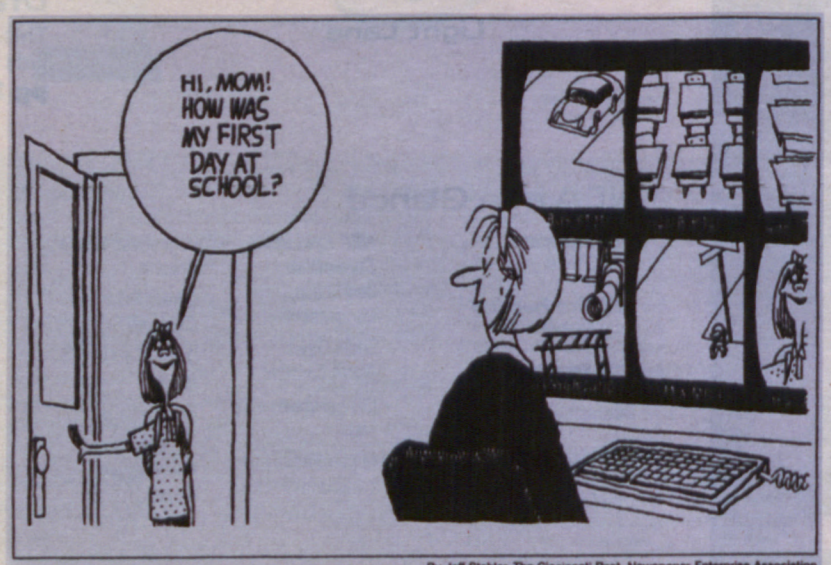
So what if math wasn't Jimmy's favorite class in school. Through his children's books and songs, Jimmy Buffett is making a difference in education.

Let's just lighten up and have a CHEESEBURGER!!

Jim Jennings
Bellevue, Nebraska

SCHOOL SAFETY

School safety, as referenced in the news media and your magazine (News, September), seems to be limited to trying to keep our students safe from violence. While this is extremely important, I believe school safety should also include ensuring that the entire facility—



By Jeff Stahler, The Cincinnati Post, Newspaper Enterprise Association

including the buildings, sidewalks and parking lots—are built and maintained in the safest manner.

We all know teenagers have a higher percentage of driving accidents, but have we designed the best parking lots and access roads near our high schools to prevent accidents?

Perhaps, as advocates for school safety, we should begin by ensuring that all parking lots and traffic patterns near our schools are designed to prevent teenage drivers from being careless and unsafe. This is a daily safety issue that doesn't get nearly enough attention. Prevention is the best course of action.

Elaine Malone
Lincoln, Nebraska

Let's Talk

Share your ideas, comments, and opinions with *NEA Today* in one of five ways:

- By mail: Write to Letters, NEA Today, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036
- Through the Web: Go to www.nea.org/neatoday and click on "Submit a Letter to the Editor"
- By E-mail: Write to neatoday@nea.org
- By Fax: 202/822-7206
- By Phone: 202/822-7201

Letters are edited for length and clarity.

I've taught in five different school systems in the past 30 years.

In the San Bernardino City Schools, where I teach now, we have pages and pages of text on student behavior. However, when some of the students break the rules, they rarely experience the consequences.

Schools don't need a new morality to follow. Schools simply need local and state governments to support safe schools and safe practices and to enforce the rules that now exist on the books. I'm always hopeful that things will improve.

Robert York
San Bernardino, California

ABOUT THE RESOLUTIONS

I just received the September issue of your magazine and am impressed with many of your articles, but what really caught my eye were resolutions on foreign/world language education and career education.

I am a German/French teacher in the Lancaster School District. I'm currently working with several other teachers in Lancaster and York counties on a project called German Career Test for High School Students. So far we have 15 schools interested in participating.

Erika Miller
Lancaster, Pennsylvania

A PROBLEM WITH THIS

I read the September '99 issue of *NEA Today* and feel that, as an organization, we're just not on the right track. I disagree with so many things I read that I continue to fume at the fact that I'm "required" to be an NEA member, or at least to donate money equal to NEA/CTA members, as a precondition of employment in my school district.

For starters, let's tackle the biggest "sacred cow" of them all. Incidentally, Mr. Chase, I applaud your use of that term and your recognition of certain problems (President's Viewpoint, September). The sacred cow to which I refer is the belief that public schools themselves are sacred and should be preserved at all costs. Universal public education is sacred, not the public schools themselves. We should welcome vouchers.

I hope for a day when education will be a priority at the local, state, and national levels. Unfortunately, I don't see NEA or CTA moving in a positive direction on that front. In fact, I see very harmful trends in what my "unions" are doing.

Darren Miller,
Rio Linda, California

WHAT KIND OF FRIEND?

I vigorously object to NEA's 1999 Friend of Education Award being given to Hillary Rodham Clinton. To place her at the top of your "Heroes & Zeroes" section in *NEA Today* is an outrage and also insults the many true friends of education.

Clinton's actions cannot be ignored. She has a record of conduct as an attorney that is at least questionable and possibly illegal. Viewing her behavior with regard to her husband's conduct, she is at best an "enabler," allowing his outrageous behavior to continue for decades!

I find it totally unacceptable that NEA has once again supported the Clintons just because of what they say, while completely ignoring what they have done.

Eugene Nalence
Newtown Square, Pennsylvania

NEW DESIGN

I am so impressed with the layout, color and content of the *NEA Today* I just received! It is so inviting! As I was reading this issue, I found myself regretting that our 130 new teachers in Green Bay Public Schools would miss this issue, until I called and requested more copies. This provides an opportunity for us to introduce the *NEA Today* to these new staff, pointing out just one way their dues works for them! Thank you!

Helen Schaal
Green Bay, Wisconsin

President's Viewpoint

BY BOB CHASE

Tuning in to the Adolescent

Children need a rock solid support system to help them weather the storm.

It might be the old middle school teacher in me, but I think that children between the ages of 10 through 17 are at their most vulnerable. Despite the growth spurts and the flexing of muscles (both literal and figurative), children at this age are uniquely fragile. Raging hormones, peer pressure, access to drugs and alcohol, conflicting social messages—abstain-indulge, abstain-indulge—and personal identity crises make these years particularly precarious.

Of course, adolescents themselves insist that they don't need parents or other adult authority figures involved in their lives. They shut their bedroom doors and mumble incoherent answers to questions such as "How was school today?" And this, in turn, feeds the popular misconception that adolescents are "breaking way" from their parents and the other adults in their lives.

But, in reality, adolescents hunger for adult role models, adult guidance, and adult sanctions. They are lost without us.

The psychologists tell us that adolescents need the adults in their lives—parents, grandparents, teachers, coaches, counselors, family physicians, and clergy—to be persistently and patiently there for them. When adolescents flirt with serious trouble or danger, they need an adult to talk them back from the edge. When they stray across the border between civility and the land of the rude and crude, they need an adult to correct them. And, when they do a good job or make a right decision, they need us to give them a pat on the back or a high five.

What's more, the adults in an adolescent's life have to help each other out. The school custodian who finds a child sobbing in the stairwell needs to tell a teacher or counselor. A teacher who is talking to a parent who is clearly at her wit's end needs to help that parent get the resources and support she needs. The parent who observes a child becoming more and more withdrawn needs to communicate that to the child's teachers.

"One thing we know for sure: Conflict avoidance and denial do not work when dealing with young adolescents in trouble— indeed they only make matters worse."

And the adults in an adolescent's life must be prepared to intervene when they see early warning signs of trouble. This might mean a parent poking around a child's room or computer, or a teacher steering a chronically belligerent student to an anger management program.

One thing we know for sure: Conflict avoidance and denial do not work when dealing with adolescents in trouble—they only make matters worse. Those many time-honored excuses for not taking action—"There will always be bullies" or "Boys will be boys" or "Don't worry, she'll grow out of it"—have all worn very thin.

Early and active intervention has become a common theme in the ongoing discussion of how to prevent another Columbine, and this makes sense. But let us not underestimate the challenge.

Educators know better than anyone that it becomes increasingly difficult to keep track of students once they enter middle school. Schools and classes tend to be larger. Teachers see 125 or more students a day. It is much easier for an adolescent to become little more than a name in a teacher's gradebook. And, as many teachers have noted, parents often become less involved in their child's school after the sixth grade.

Compounding the problem, resource-strapped districts have cut back on the number of counselors, nurses, social workers, and psychologists in the schools—the very people who might help a troubled adolescent when a teacher or a parent cannot.

The bottom line is this: All children should have at least one adult in middle and high school who knows them very well. And by "very well," I mean the adult should know the child's parents, the child's interests, and the child's problems. And if the child is involved in the social welfare or criminal justice system, the one adult in the school should know that, too. Call it "intimate vigilance."

Comments? You can E-mail Bob Chase at BobChase@nea.org. If you would like a response, please be sure to include your name and NEA local affiliate.

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What Color Is Beautiful?

A kindergartner says he wants to change his skin color. A California teacher responds.

BY ALEJANDRO SEGURA-MORA

Most of my kindergarten students have already been picked up by their parents. Two children still sit on the mat in the cafeteria lobby, waiting. Occasionally, one of them stands to look through the door's opaque windows to see if he can make out a parent coming.

Ernesto, the darkest child in my class, unexpectedly says in Spanish, "Maestro, my mom is giving me pills to turn me white."

"Is that right?" I respond, also in Spanish. "And why do you want to be white?"

"Because I don't like my color," he says.

"I think your color is very beautiful, and you are beautiful as well," I say.

I try to conceal how his comment saddens and alarms me, because I want to encourage his sharing.

"I don't like to be dark," he explains.

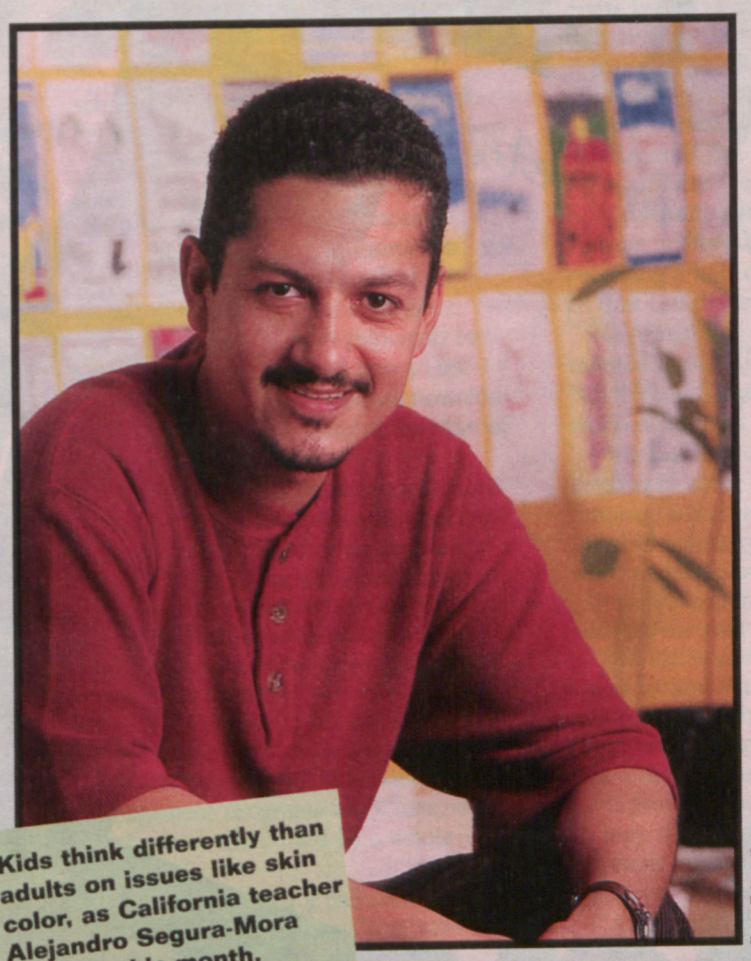
His mother, who is slightly darker than he, walks in the door. Ernesto rushes to take her hand and leaves for home.

White privilege is a value deeply ingrained in our social fabric. "Oh look at him, how pretty and blond looking he is," is a common expression if the baby has European features and coloring. And if the babies came out dark, like Ernesto? The comments are often, "Hay, pobrecito, sali tan prietito"— which translated means, "Poor baby, he came out so dark."

Even among co-workers, I hear similar comments.

Without knowing it, Ernesto opened the door to a lively dialogue in our classroom about skin color. I read to students *Nia Bonita*, written by Ana Mara Machado (Kane/Miller Book Publishers, 1996), which tells the story of an albino bunny who loves the beauty of a girl's dark skin and wants to find out how he can get black fur.

I started by asking my students if they thought the girl on the book cover was pretty. I was not surprised that several students thought the little girl was ugly. When I asked them why, one student responded, "Because she has black color and her hair is really curly." Ernesto added, "Because she is black-skinned."



Bob Riha, Jr.

Kids think differently than adults on issues like skin color, as California teacher Alejandro Segura-Mora explains this month.

"But you are dark like her," Stephanie quickly rebutted to Ernesto, while several students nodded in agreement. "How come you don't like her?"

"Because I don't like black girls," Ernesto quickly responded. Several students affirmed Ernesto's statement.

"All children are pretty," Stephanie replied.

In their defense of dark skin, other students offered similar comments: "Her color is dark and pretty," "All girls are pretty," or, "I like the color black."

Most of my kindergarten students could not articulate the social depreciation of dark skin, but I was amazed by their willingness to struggle with an issue that so many teachers ignore, avoid, and pretend does not exist.

At the same time, it was clear that many of my students had already begun to internalize notions of white privilege. I try to create a space where my students can begin to look critically at the many forms of unequal power relations that, even at the age of five, have already begun to determine whether they love or hate their skin color, and consequently, themselves.

At the end of our discussion of *Nia Bonita*, I told my students that, in my opinion, the girl in the story is beautiful. I said that my skin color is beautiful. I caressed my face and kissed my cinnamon-colored hands several times happily and passionately, so that they could concretely see my love for my skin color. I told them that Gerardo, a light-complexioned student, has beautiful skin color and so does Ernesto.

Despite our class discussions on beauty, ugliness, and skin color, Ernesto did not appear to change his mind. But I hope that every time Ernesto takes one of his magic pills — vitamins his mother later explained — he will remember how his classmates challenged the view that to be beautiful, one has to be white.

A former kindergarten teacher, Alejandro Segura-Mora is now a sixth grade teacher at the Slauson Middle School in Azusa, a town of 40,000 in Southern California. You can contact Segura-Mora by E-mail at alejandro.segura-mora@cgu.edu.

Most of the mail we've been getting about the newly redesigned *NEA Today* isn't really about the new design. In fact, since the magazine's new look debuted last month, the bulk of the mail we've received has preferred to talk about substance.

And that's good. Substance, after all, is what really counts in a publication. The design is just there to help you find the content you really need to read.

Bill Fischer
editor

Most of the content comments you've passed on to us about our last issue have been about the cover story, "Don't Know Much about Technology?" Many of you liked our 50 tips to make computers work for you.

Technology, other readers noted, is more than computers. That's right, of course. Technology isn't just computers, but three pages of *NEA Today* pages wouldn't be enough to cover the full technology range.

So we decided to concentrate on computer technology, since that seems to be the one area where NEA members are having the hardest time.

This month's *FYI* feature on page 29 offers, incidentally, a nice followup to last month's cover story.

That cover, you may remember, offered specific, practical tips to help NEA members make the most of computers in their daily lives.

In this month's *FYI* column, we're spotlighting some new research on how to harness computer power to help students learn.

This isn't some pie-in-the-sky research. The authors visited some 100 schools and talked to thousands of educators. Unfortunately, as the article points out, computers are often considered an add-on and seldom truly integrated into instruction.

But when technology is integrated into teaching and learning, as this new research notes, the results can change the whole dynamic of classroom instruction. Solid stuff. Enjoy.

Bill Fischer

Scott Suchman

Anger in the Halls

Anger management programs are giving educators the tools they need to create safer schools.

At Deerfield Run Elementary in Prince George's County, Maryland, the student suspension rate has dropped 65 percent over the past year.

At Kennedy Middle School in Eugene, Oregon, referrals to the principal's office fell from 1,400 in 1996 to only 400 the past school year.

And at Connecticut's Southington High School teams of school staff and social workers are now routinely stopping trouble before it starts.

None of these schools has made national headlines. The media remain fixated on the image of schools as unsafe places. But schools like Deerfield Run, Kennedy Middle, and Southington High are showing that America's classrooms can indeed be safe havens in a turbulent world.

Schools such as these are intervening to help kids deal with anger and depression before they explode out in violence.

"To teach academics," as Holli McKelvey, a guidance counselor at Deerfield Run, puts it, "we have to make sure kids are with us emotionally."

That has never been easy. Growing up, after all, is always hard, and teasing and bullying have left emotional scars for as long as young people have walked school halls.

So what's changed? Do kids today face more emotional pressures than kids in years past? Or, at a time when family support systems seem to be unraveling the nation over, are there just fewer places for kids to turn for help?

Whatever the answers may be, schools are left with lots of kids who need help.

Some deeply troubled young people need intense mental health treatment. But, for most youngsters navigating their way through the emotional pressure-cooker that is adolescence, school programs that emphasize conflict resolution and anger man-

Preventing trouble in schools, observes Maryland NEA member Holli McKelvey, means taking steps to help students understand their emotions.

Darcy Padilla

agement can make an enormous difference, as the schools discussed on these pages are demonstrating so well.

LESSONS IN SELF CONTROL

At Deerfield Elementary, where the suspension rate has plummeted, NEA members are working with a popular program called Second Step.

The program, created by the Seattle-based Committee for Children, offers schools low-cost tools and training to teach kids empathy, impulse control, and anger management.

> "We show them that anger develops in stages, from feeling mildly irritated, to being really mad, to reaching a boiling point," says McKelvey.

Holli McKelvey trains fellow school staffers how to use Second Step.

"To teach the empathy phase of the program to younger kids, we use a series of cards showing different facial expressions," explains McKelvey. "The kids explain what the person is feeling in each picture and learn how to put themselves in another person's shoes."

In the anger management section, students learn cues to recognize when their anger is getting out of control.

"We show them that anger develops in stages, from feeling mildly irritated, to being really mad, to reaching a boiling point," notes McKelvey. "We focus on how the body gives us signs and cues that anger is rising, by things like sweaty palms or clenched fists."

The key, McKelvey adds, is recognizing when anger is building and learning to rely on other skills to get you through stressful situations.

These skills include using "I feel" statements to communicate.

"When someone takes things from your desk or locker without asking, instead of lashing out," McKelvey tells students, "say, 'I feel angry when you take my belongings without asking.' It sounds simple, but it works."

At Deerfield Run, Second Step lessons are taught by all classroom teachers as part of the regular curriculum. And parents are invited to a workshop on the program so they can reinforce Second Step skills at home.

"We do many other things in our school to reduce conflict, but Second Step touches everyone," notes McKelvey.

Kennedy Middle School in Oregon began using Second Step three years ago after teachers raised concerns about harassment and intimidation among students. They searched for ways to teach pro-social behavior.

All school staff—from principals to custodians—were trained how to use Second Step, and each teacher now conducts Second Step lessons at the start of the school year.

"Students practice techniques for calming down and working to understand other people's feelings," says teacher Phyllis Gary. "They've learned to say things in a way that's not accusatory, so other kids aren't put on edge."

Cynthia Turley teaches seventh and eighth grade language arts at Kennedy Middle School. Anger management programs work best, she emphasizes, when used by a whole school.

"We have created a culture in our school," Turley explains, "that says we all recognize that some things just aren't accepted."

MANAGING ANGER IN HIGH SCHOOL

At Southington High School in Connecticut, the goal is identifying kids on the edge before they take a self-destructive leap. The tool for meeting that goal: the student assistance team.

The concept is simple. By having a team of educators talk and share information about students, schools can spot trouble and jump in with solutions before things get out of hand.

At Southington High, counselors, social workers, teachers, and administrators are part of a student assistance team that meets regularly.

"Classroom teachers are on the lookout for students who show signs of potential trouble," says Laurie Galicia, a social worker at the school. "Those signs include disruptive behavior, declining grades, or isolation."

The teachers make referrals to a social worker or guidance counselor, who brings the issue to the student assistance team for discussion. Social workers like Galicia then meet with parents and help find outside resources to help students and families.

"The key to preventing violence by students is to really take the time to get to know them," says Galicia.

BULLYPROOFING ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Stupid, faggot, queer, ugly, idiot.

The words elementary school students use to taunt and tease are enough to make any educator cringe.

In states like Kansas, NEA members are curbing this hatefulness through an NEA program called BullyProof.

NEA staff has been training local NEA affiliates across the country on how to use the program. In Olathe, Kansas, many educators are now receiving a half-day training on exercises that can discourage bullying.

NEA member Greg Oborny implemented the BullyProof strategies at NorthView Elementary School when he worked there as school principal.

"We learned to identify the behaviors that make some kids bullies," says Oborny, who now works at Regency Place Elementary. "We also examined what makes kids a bullying target."

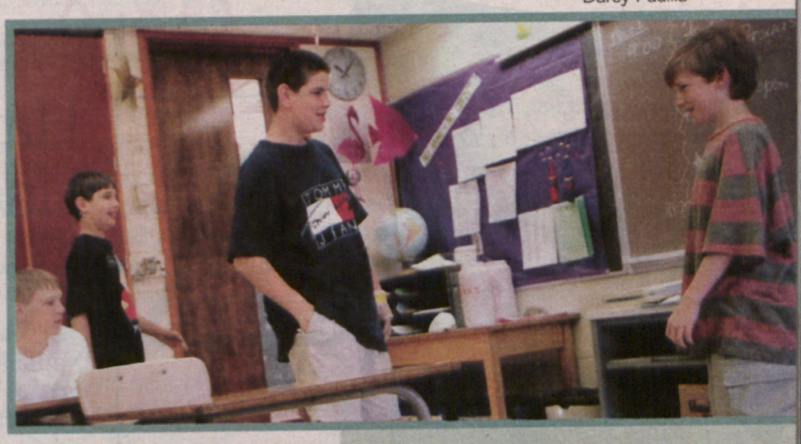
It's also important, Oborny adds, to address the role of bystanders.

"We ask students why did they just stand by and watch something bad happen to a peer," he explains. "We help them understand what they can do when they witness bullying."

At NorthView, teachers also ask kids to map the school and place a red dot on areas where they don't feel safe and "smileys" in areas they feel protected.

"At the junior high level," says Oborny, "it's usually the locker rooms and hallways where students report the most problems. These are places where there's not a lot of supervision."

Darcy Padilla



At Oregon's Kennedy Middle School (top and above), students use role playing to learn how to express themselves and defuse stressful situations.

Buses, bathrooms, and drinking fountains are other areas students typically describe as "scary."

"This allows us to change how we supervise our students," notes Oborny.

"After BullyProof was integrated into the curriculum," he adds, "I noticed kids working with problem solving. They used words like respect, responsibility, and integrity."

And they're growing up with the skills they need to face life with confidence. In today's difficult world, that's no small feat. ✔

—Karen Gutloff

NEA Launches Safe Schools Broadcast Series in January

This winter, NEA will begin an innovative series of broadcast programs that offer educators tools and resources they need to curb violence in their schools.

This new series is a partnership between NEA, the Learning First Alliance, and two businesses concerned about school safety, the EchoStar Communications Corporation and Future View.

EchoStar, a company based in Littleton, Colorado, is donating 1,000 satellite dishes and airtime that will allow school districts nationwide to become part of the NEA-EchoStar Broadcast Network.

The Learning First Alliance, a collaboration of 12 leading education organizations, including NEA, will develop the programming on safe schools that will be broadcast over this special network starting this January.

The satellite feeds, aimed at an audience of school staff, parents, and community leaders, will cover such relevant topics as the following:

- Identifying early warning signs.
- Gays, subcultures, and cliques: myths and realities.
- Valuing differences and respecting diversity.
- Anger management, peer mediation, and conflict resolution.

"It is time for every adult in America to start taking it personally that children are killing children," says NEA President Bob Chase. "With this partnership, we will be able to reach thousands of communities across America."

To apply for a free Echostar satellite dish and programming, visit: www.nea.org/issues/safescho/echostar.

This new network is just part of NEA's ongoing work for safe schools.

This summer, for instance, NEA began distributing to state affiliates copies of *Building Safe and Orderly Schools: Tools and Skills to Make It Happen.* Designed for teachers and support staff, the toolkit includes two videos on managing student behavior in and outside the classroom.

A joint project of the NEA and the American Federation of Teachers, the kit is available through the NEA Professional Library. For pricing and ordering information, call 800/229-4200 or visit www.nea.org/books. ✔

RESOURCES

Tools for Safe Schools

The Safe Schools page on the NEA Web site offers educators a variety of free materials that can be downloaded. Visit www.nea.org/issues/safe scho.

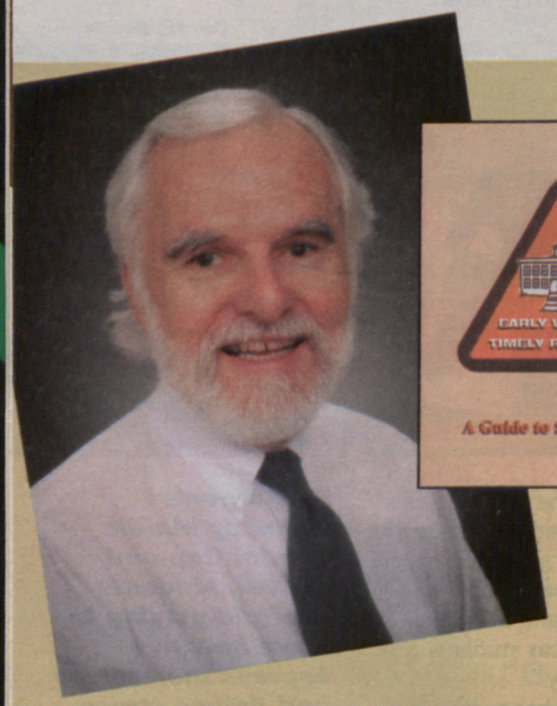
To receive information on the Second Step violence prevention curriculum, call the Committee for Children at 800/634-4449 or visit its site at www.cfchildren.org.

Early Warning, Timely Response: A Guide to Safe Schools helps educators recognize warning signs in troubled students and deliver help before it's too late. A copy can be downloaded from the NEA Web site at www.nea.org/ issues/safescho. Or contact the NEA Human and Civil Rights Department at 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036.

BullyProof: A Teacher's Guide on Teasing and Bullying . Cost: $15.95, NEA members. $19.95, non-members. To order, visit the NEA Professional Library at www.nea.org/books. Or call 800/229-4200 and ask for Stock #1873-7-00-FG.

The Hope Foundation is sponsoring a three-part videoconference on school safety, titled *Breaking the Cycle of Violence.* Among the participants: NEA Executive Committee member Denise Rockwell (Woods). The series next airs October 19. To downlink programs or to purchase copies, contact Nancy Silas Shin at 812/337-7703.

Q&A



Expressions of violence in a student's writing or drawing, says school psychologist Kevin Dwyer, can signal impending trouble—but not always.

Have Students Headed for Trouble? Understanding the Warning Signs

Kevin Dwyer, an NEA member and the president of the National Association of School Psychologists, works with schools nationwide on combatting violence. He spoke recently with *NEA Today* on recognizing kids headed for trouble, the subject of his book, *Early Warning, Timely Response: A Guide to Safe Schools.*

What are the early warning signs that kids are headed for trouble?

Withdrawal from social contacts can be an important indicator. Other signs include excessive feelings of isolation and rejection, uncontrolled anger, patterns of hitting and bullying, or expressing violence in writings and drawings.

When should written or verbal statements be a source of worry?

You have to understand violence and aggression in context. If kids have an assignment to write about spring and they say spring is the best time to kill someone, that's a problem. But the violence in the writing of a student asked to write an exciting adventure story is a different situation.

What should educators do when they see signs of trouble?

Teachers don't get enough support when they do report troublesome behavior. Ideally, teachers should let the school psychologist or social worker know what's going on. The student and family can then be referred to help.

If kids are already angry, how can you get them to attend counseling?

You tell the student he has a choice—not attending school or talking to a counselor. Then sit down with students and parents in a calm manner.

Are anger management programs enough to curb violence?

With serious violence, workshops can't replace professional intervention. Conflict resolution and peer mediation are good for the kid who has no serious problems. If a child is on Prozac or Lithium, you need more serious help.

Would Stronger Gun Control Laws Make Schools Safer?

BILL SMITH, *a veteran educator with 23 years experience, teaches U.S. history at Thurston High School in Springfield, Oregon. He also serves as chair of the school's history department. Last spring, Smith spoke out in favor of gun control in testimony before the U.S. House of Representatives.*

yes

In the past year, I have become all too aware of the devastating impact of school violence on teachers, students, and communities. On May 21, 1998, a 15-year-old Thurston High School student opened fire in our school cafeteria, killing two students and wounding 22 others. Three hundred students were in the cafeteria at the time of the shooting, including my own son, who watched as his best friend was shot four times.

Since that time, the atmosphere at Thurston has changed dramatically. Students and faculty have become much more aware of the potential for violence. Every day, as I walk through the school cafeteria, I think about last year's tragedy and worry about the potential for more violence in our school.

There is no question there are a variety of factors that contribute to violence in schools. Laws that allow easy access of guns to unqualified citizens, however, cannot be overlooked as fundamental barriers to school safety.

It should be obvious that legislation decreasing kids' exposure to guns will positively affect the safety of our schools. For much too long, we have allowed ourselves to believe there is no correlation between a society with extremely accessible firearms and deadly violence.

Children without access to their parent's firearms or illegal guns will be less likely to commit violent acts with guns at school.

I believe the incident at Thurston High, like the tragedies at Columbine High and elsewhere, demonstrate the need for a comprehensive approach to school safety. But there is no simple, magic solution. Preventing school violence requires a combination of youth programs and increased school security.

Since our own tragedy, our school has hired an additional counselor to help students deal with the trauma of last year's violence and to work with students on violence prevention.

But these efforts will be inadequate without measures to block youth access to firearms and other weapons.

The gunman entered our school with a semi-automatic rifle, a 9-millimeter pistol, and a 50-round ammunition clip. No child should have access to such weapons. Congress must enact laws to:

- bar the transfer to and possession by juveniles of semi-automatic assault weapons and high-capacity ammunition clips.
- increase penalties for selling or transferring handguns, assault weapons, and high-capacity ammunition clips to juveniles.
- hold gun owners responsible if children gain access to loaded firearms or use an adult's weapon in the commission of a crime.
- impose mandatory background checks and waiting periods on individuals purchasing any firearms.

Congress should also provide funding to train teachers, administrators, and all education support personnel to recognize the early warning signs of potential violence.

Until stronger gun control measures are taken, I fear there will be future tragedies like the horrors that took place at my school, Thurston High, and far too many others. ✔

NEA member SHERRY McMORRIS *lives in Sidney, Montana, and teaches kindergarten at West Side School. McMorris and her family have long used guns for recreational hunting.*

no

In the aftermath of the school shootings in Littleton, Colorado, and Jonesboro, Arkansas, it's not surprising to hear some say stronger gun control laws are a means of preventing future incidents.

Do I think stronger gun control laws would make our schools safer? No. To me, gun control laws are the equivalent of putting a bandaid on a festering wound. More gun control laws might make some people feel better. But they would do little to stop someone intent on hurting others.

Why do I feel this way?

I live in a state where many homes have a variety of guns for hunting or recreational target shooting. My husband Coy and I raised two sons in a home with several guns and a hunting dog, with pheasants to hunt in the fields across the road and behind the house.

We have many fond family memories of hunting trips and excursions to the family farm for target practice. At all times, Coy taught out sons safe and responsible handling of their firearms.

The proliferation of guns today is not the problem. Guns are no more available today than they were in the 1980s, yet school shootings were not as prevalent during that decade. The issue is American kids today and their attitudes toward violence.

According to author Steven Halbrook, Switzerland has more firepower per person than any other country in the world. Yet it is one of the safest places to live. Switzerland has a lower homicide and robbery rate than Great Britain, which has strict gun control laws. There have no school massacres in Switzerland where kids and guns mix freely. Guns, clearly, are not the real problem.

If youngsters have made up their minds to break the law by killing classmates, would having to obtain the guns illegally stop them? I doubt it. If we make guns illegal the gun trade will become another lucrative market for criminals.

Other weapons can kill and are more readily available than guns. A student with a knife could kill several people before being disarmed. Bomb-making materials are readily available in stores and information on making bombs is plentiful on the Internet. A student intent on killing other people will find a way to do so.

I asked my sons for their input on this issue. Their response? The real issue, they told me, is why do these children feel compelled to act violently against their teachers and fellow students?

Once we understand why some children are so disturbed, then we can make an effort to fix the underlying problem.

Parents must take the lead. Many children today are the products of poor parenting. Kids who have not been taught by their parents how to properly channel their frustrations will turn to violence as their solution.

By focusing on gun control laws, we are ignoring underlying social, emotional, and mental issues that lead to school violence. If we fail to address the insults, humiliation, and cruelty involved in the way our students treat each other, then we are apt to see more violence, no matter what gun control laws may be in effect. ✔

What's Your Opinion?

Would stronger gun control laws make schools safer?
To vote, visit www.nea.org/neatoday and see the results instantly.

Should school computer labs be phased out?
The tally on this debate question from the last issue of *NEA Today*.
14% Yes 86% No

Can We Talk?

NEA local affiliates have a new tool for improving public education. It's called a public conversation.

Last spring, when school shootings hit the headlines, NEA members in Clark County, Nevada, already had in place a speakers' bureau on school safety. The speakers—28 specially prepared teachers—stood ready to talk to community groups about strategies for keeping schools safe.

And last spring, about the same time Florida Governor Jeb Bush signed a statewide private school tuition voucher law, NEA members in Dallas, with community allies at their side, helped persuade Texas lawmakers to kill voucher legislation and instead enact a $3,000 pay raise for teachers.

What do these two good news stories have in common?

Both successes are byproducts of NEA's new Public Engagement Project, which helps local affiliates organize public conversations to build community consensus and collaboration to improve schools.

A public conversation is simply an evening of discussion, co-sponsored by an NEA local affiliate and community groups, on public education. Participants in the conversation talk about everything from the purpose of public education to the obstacles public schools face.

It's all incredibly civilized. Trained facilitators don't let bullies or self-professed experts dominate, and everybody gets a chance to speak.

Phil McLaurin

In an evening of civilized discussion, participants in a "public conversation" air views on where their public schools stand and where they should be going.

The results, in reports from the field, are impressive indeed:

- Educators and community residents find common ground on priorities like safety and student achievement.
- Everyone, from parents to business leaders, learns that the best community resources often sit right across the table.
- NEA members find allies in the quest for quality schools.

Launched last year, the Public Engagement Project is being piloted by a group of local affiliates across the country. Each has received at least $7,500, plus technical advice, from NEA.

One of those affiliates, the **Clark County Education Association,** has co-sponsored public conversations with groups like the Nevada PTA and the Southern Nevada Rotary Clubs. In the process, CCEA learned early—even before Littleton—that school safety is a top public concern.

In response, the local has built strong links with the state attorney general's office and begun a school safety speakers' bureau. These efforts have earned CCEA the district's respect as *the* county organization taking the lead on school safety.

"This process works as long as you don't get sweaty palms over losing control—and as long as you trust people to make wise decisions."

—Dick Bernard, Education Minnesota field rep

An update from other Public Engagement Project sites:

- Through public conversations, the **Classroom Teachers of Dallas** has forged local consensus on the importance of applying educational standards equally across the district, involving parents, and creating more customer-friendly schools.

"Before the initial conversation," points out UniServ director Cynthia Goode, "CTD had to improve relationships and develop trust within the community."

That hard work paid off. "This engagement project enabled the Association to develop community coalitions," stresses

Report Card

NAME	GRADE	COMMENTS
The governor and legistature of Nevada	*Incomplete*	Despite a huge surplus, won't appropriate funds for a school employee pay hike, leaving educators as the only group of public employees without a raise. The Nevada State Education Association will address this attention deficit by petitioning for a business profits tax.
The school district of Medford, Minnesota	*F*	Charged with undermining contract bargaining, the district now claims it "lost" recordings of a closed-door meeting it was legally required to tape. Recommendation: remedial education in ethics, values.
Members of the Arizona Education Association	*A+*	Highly motivated. After Arizona's house passed a voucher bill sponsored by the superintendent of public instruction, hundreds of calls and E-mails from AEA members persuaded the state senate not to vote on the bill this year.
Nebraska Governor Mike Johanns	*A*	Great potential. This newly elected Republican convened a school safety summit co-sponsored by NEA's Nebraska affiliate and pledged to empower teachers in the classroom every way he legally can.

YOUR DUES DID IT

Taking Cleveland to Court: NEA successfully sued in federal district court to stop abuses in Cleveland's voucher program, which ran 41 percent over budget in 1998 and has not improved student performance. "Taxpayers would be much better served by proven education reforms that serve *all* children," says NEA President Bob Chase. For more about the Cleveland case and other voucher updates, see page 18.

Grants for Good Works: Every year, NEA awards 25 Urban Grants of $4,000 each to urban local affiliates with 500 or more active members, to fund projects that help build quality schools and promote cooperation, collaboration, and community. For information or to apply for the next round of grants, E-mail lrobinson@nea.org. ✔

AEA

Alaska UniServ Director Carol Christopher, standing, elicits taxpayers' views on schools during a public conversation in Anchorage.

Goode. "CTD was approached by community groups for voucher information and for help in persuading the *Dallas Morning News* to report both sides of the voucher issue!

"*Together*," she says, "we lobbied to stop vouchers, maintain school health clinics, and win higher teacher salaries."

• Through a public conversation in Minnesota's District 833, the **United Teachers of South Washington County** has helped parents focus on needs like instilling a love of learning in kids, improving communications, and boosting parental involvement. Out of this project has emerged a citizen-led group called Community Conversations About Public Schools, which has delivered policy suggestions to the school board.

"Tremendous good for kids can be accomplished through this process," says Education Minnesota field rep Dick Bernard, "as long as you don't get sweaty palms over losing control and you trust people to make very wise decisions."

• Building on a tradition of community outreach, the **Anchorage (Alaska) Education Association** has teamed up with co-sponsors like the Chamber of Commerce and the Alaska State PTA to organize three public conversations, including one exclusively for business people.

The NEA Public Engagement Project "has enhanced our Association's image because it has created venues for people to discuss what our district should be doing," says local President Rich Kronberg. "We've moved from a group known only for acrimonious bargaining with the school district to a group that is truly concerned about quality education."

The Public Engagement Project is also working with NEA local affiliates in San Antonio, Texas; Charlotte, North Carolina; Sacramento, California; Charleston, South Carolina; and five districts in Pennyslvania. ✔

For information on starting the process of community engagement, E-mail NEA staffers Phil McLaurin (PMcLaurin@nea.org) or Sheila Simmons (SSimmons@nea.org).

PRESS CLIPS

New Unionism, New Image

From the Orlando (Florida) Sentinel, July 5:

"'Teachers union.' The two words evoke complaints about low salaries, conflicts with principals, and a circling of wagons against any criticism of public education.

"But the National Education Association, which is meeting in Orlando, has been working to change that image.

"Last week, union members turned their attention to teacher quality, talking about national certification, and the need to mentor new teachers.

"The nation's largest teachers union wants to be viewed as an advocate for better schools, not just a trade union seeking better conditions. NEA President Bob Chase calls it the new unionism.

"Chase does not repudiate the old union. Teachers were once terribly underpaid and had no prestige, and the union had to address that, he said. Once it did, he said, 'we had enough strength where we could move in a new direction and meet the needs of the kids.'" ✔

News Tips Welcome

Got news with an Association connection?
Be it bargaining or legislative gains, the latest in professional development, or advances in school safety, all story leads are welcome.
Send your tip to neatnews@list.nea.org or fax 202/822-7206.

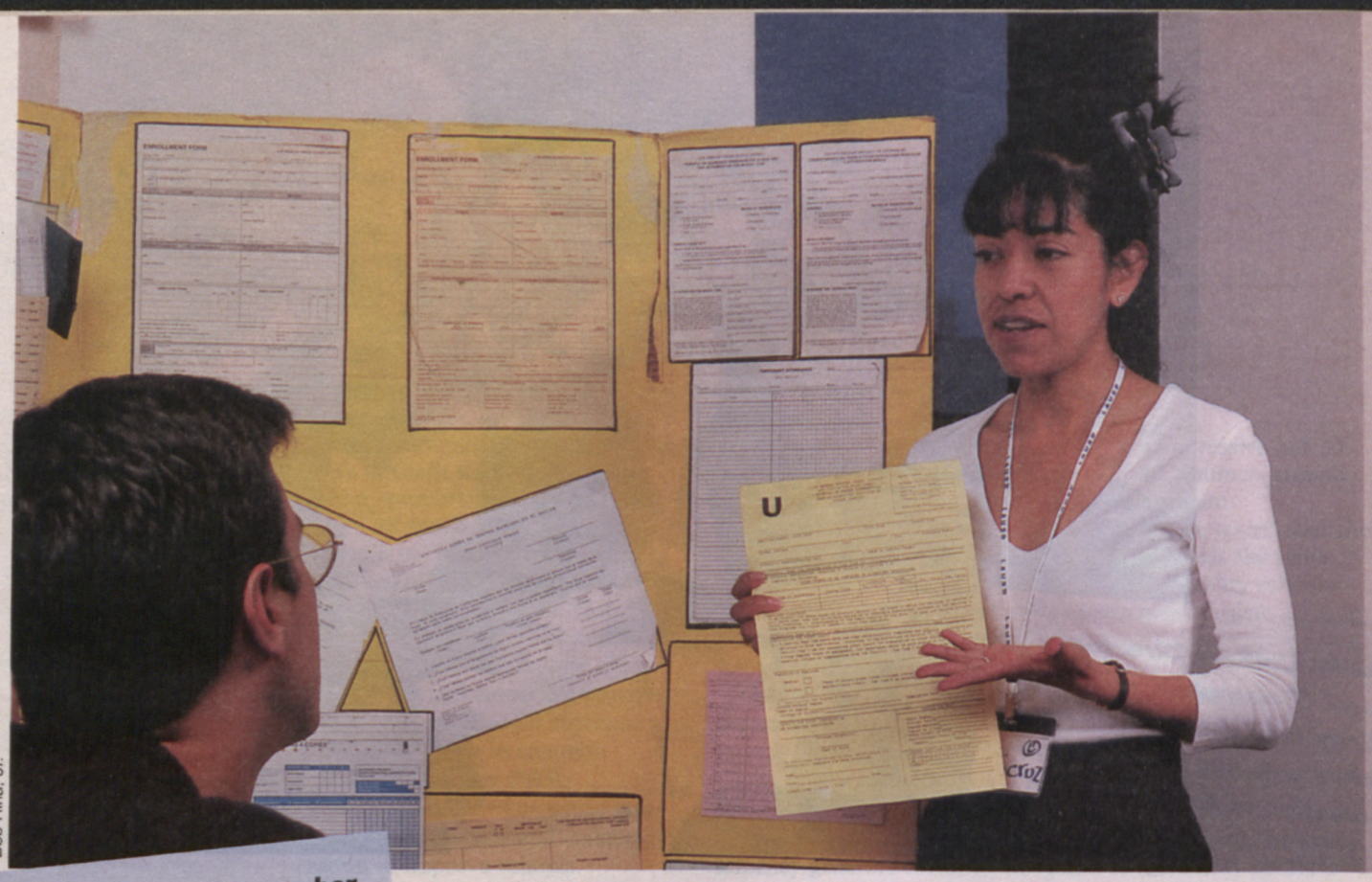
Heroes & Zeroes

Bill Hurley

▲ Dozens of Wisconsin NEA members and parents joined a 240-mile walk in June to protest revenue controls that force districts to cut staff and programs. Marchers handed 2,500 petition signatures to the governor's office and earned a follow-up meeting with Governor Tommy Thompson and his staff.

▼ If Pennsylvania Governor Tom Ridge gets his way, any wannabe educator who has a B average in the area he or she wants to teach and completes a two-week course can obtain "alternative certification." No "10-day wonders" for the Pennsylvania State Education Association. "We'll fight to preserve the right of every child to be taught by a qualified, licensed teacher," pledges PSEA President David Gondak.

▲ A round of applause to recording artist Kenny G for establishing his Kenny G Miracles Foundation. The foundation's goal is to restore music education programs to public schools where arts budgets have been reduced or completely eliminated. Kenny will donate all profits from his new single, "What a Wonderful World" to help fund foundation activities.



Bob Riha, Jr.

Veteran Los Angeles teacher Mari Cruz Cuestas runs a training session for 12 new elementary teachers.

Breaking in Teachers Without Breaking Them

In Los Angeles, new teachers learn the nuts and bolts of their trade, with the help of those who have been in the trenches.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"Too often, the least experienced teachers are assigned to the most difficult schools and students. We need to help newly minted teachers get their footing. They should teach in the fields they were trained in. There need to be extended teacher preparation programs, mentoring, coaching, and peer assistance."

—Hillary Rodham Clinton, speaking at the 1999 NEA Representative Assembly

Teaching isn't a picnic. But when you're a new teacher, you can be the *lunch* itself. Far too often, new teachers lacking basic classroom management skills are slotted into the toughest classes.

Mix in the stresses of teaching to new state standards and disciplining kids without full administrative back-up, and you can be chewed up and spit out by the system.

That's why the NEA-affiliated United Teachers Los Angeles has joined with the Los Angeles school district to create a New Teachers Training Academy.

Since its founding last year, the academy has given at least 2,000 new Los Angeles educators—many hired with emergency credentials to meet the state's K-3 class size reduction requirements—40 hours of practical training in running a classroom, before they start their regular assignments.

The academy equipped Veronica Camelo, a former teaching assistant with a B.A. in English literature and Chicano studies, with the tools she needed to succeed as a first grade teacher at Loreto Street Elementary in Cypress Park.

Classroom veterans gave Camelo the inside scoop on filling out paperwork, managing a class, disciplining students, and working in a bilingual environment. And they instructed her on teaching to district and state standards.

Camelo's academy class had to pick a standard and create a program for teaching it. For her part, Camelo created a week-long project using books and songs to teach first graders the water cycle, from evaporation to transpiration.

On her last day of training, Camelo had the option of visiting either an actual classroom or a magnet school science center. She chose the latter, and that decision changed her outlook.

Before going through the New Teacher Training Academy, explains Camelo, now in her second year on the job, she was hesitant about teaching science. But after visiting the science center, "I felt a lot more confident and knew there were resources available."

"The New Teachers Training Academy gives new educators lots of confidence and the tools they need to succeed," says UTLA staffer Steve

THE BOTTOM LINE

TAX CUTS: The million richest American households will average $31,800 a year in savings if the $792 billion tax cut passed by Congress this past summer ever becomes law. The average tax break for working Americans: $157 a year. For more: www.ctj.org.

TAX CUT FINE-PRINT: Hidden in the tax cut passed by Congress is a tax subsidy for K-12 private school tuition. The bill also offers tax credits for multinational corporations, but none for school modernizing bonds. For more: www.nea.org/lac/senatebudget.

SURPLUS: The vaunted $1 trillion federal budget surplus projected over the next 10 years assumes cuts of 20 percent and more in education and other domestic spending. For more: www.ourfuture.org and www.childrensdefense.org/joint_house_tax.html.

BUDGET PRIORITIES: Pentagon spending could be cut by 15 percent, about $40 billion annually, without endangering national security, says Lawrence Korb, the Reagan Administration assistant secretary of defense. For more: www.businessleaders.org.

Blazak. "They are less likely to be frustrated when they enter the classroom."

The academy, a collaborative project of the 41,000-member UTLA and the school district, is a welcome smooth spot in what has often been a bumpy labor-management relationship.

"The cost to the union has been low, because the district picks up the majority of the academy's tab," points out UTLA professional development specialist Theresa Montaño.

The new teacher academy is just one of a continuum of programs run through the Helen Bernstein Staff Development and Training Center, housed in UTLA's office complex and jointly run by the union and district.

Among the other offerings: orientation classes on National Board certification and a pre-intern program, now being developed in cooperation with the University of California at Los Angeles to gear up provisionally licensed teachers for full certification.

"The Helen Bernstein center is a sort of soup-to-nuts program dedicated to the entire career of teaching," says UTLA President Day Higuchi. "We started at both ends and now we're working towards the middle!"

UTLA has a history of providing high-powered assistance to teachers in professional development, notes Judith Renyi, director of NEA's National Foundation for the Improvement of Education (NFIE).

"Our training academy gives new teachers lots of confidence and the tools they need to succeed."

— Steve Blazak, United Teachers Los Angeles

That track record, particularly groundbreaking work on language arts assessment, has earned UTLA a $25,000 grant from NFIE's Change of Course program for the planning of its professional development center, which opened in 1998. ✔

(Reporting by Aliya Sternstein)

For more information on the UTLA professional development program, contact: Steve Blazak, UTLA, 3303 Wilshire Blvd., 10th Floor, Los Angeles, CA 90010. E-mail: utla1@aol.com.

A Helping Hand to New Colleagues Across the Nation

More and more NEA members are standing up for new teachers. Just a sampling:

■ In the **Santa Cruz (California) New Teacher Project,** veteran educators have provided strong support to new teachers for more than a decade. How it works: The veteran is exempted from the classroom for up to three years to serve as an advisor to 15 new teachers, providing both one-to-one support and practice assessment.

■ Thanks to lobbying by the **North Carolina Association of Educators,** Governor Jim Hunt has signed a law prohibiting schools from assigning extracurricular duties to teachers with three years of experience or less. The new law also makes teachers with 27 or more years of service exempt from extracurricular assignments. And the law instructs districts to limit non-instructional duties assigned to beginning teachers.

The goal: Allow new teachers to focus on professional development, and encourage veteran teachers to serve as mentors.

■ Last year, members of the **Nebraska State Education Association** won legislation authorizing use of lottery dollars to develop new-teacher mentoring programs across the state. A portion of the funds can pay stipends to veterans who volunteer to mentor first-year teachers.

"The first five years are critical to whether young people stay in the profession," says NSEA staffer Jay Sears. "If we can smooth that transition, we'll have them as colleagues for life."

Back Talk

When they say: "Why join an NEA affiliate? You can get a cheaper deal elsewhere."

Think about this: "It's important not just to join any association, but to be selective, because that organization becomes part of your support system," says Texas Elementary Teacher of the Year Norma Jackson, a staunch member of the Texas State Teachers Association/NEA. "If something goes on in my classroom and I'm not sure how to handle it, I'm a phone call away or down the hall from TSTA/NEA support. That's very comforting to me."

BASICS FOR BEGINNERS

Do You Keep a Professional File?

You know, of course, that administrators keep a detailed personnel file on you. But have you compiled a *personal* file that's complete and up to date?

No, not that coffee-stained folder in your desk drawer or the cardboard box in your basement.

We're talking about a professional employment file kept in a safe place, with documentation that could counter false charges about your job performance.

A professional file, the South Dakota Education Association advises its members, should contain, among other things:

- All signed contracts, including extra-duty contracts.
- All performance evaluations and plans of assistance.
- All written directives or reprimands.
- Descriptions of any incidents involving students, parents, colleagues, or administrators.
- Up-to-date transcripts of all course work.
- Pension information.
- Recommendations, awards, and honors.
- Work schedules for current and past years.
- The current Association contract or other negotiated agreements.
- The current employee and student handbooks.
- All correspondence between you and administrators.
- All correspondence between you and parents, including complimentary notes.
- Proof of Association membership.
- A copy of the NEA Educators Employment Liability insurance plan.

For more information on what should go into your professional employment file, contact your UniServ office. ✔

KINDERGARTEN: More students are starting school with full-day sessions. In 1967, only 10 percent of kindergarten students attended school all-day. The 1997 rate: 50 percent. For more: www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/1999/cb99-124.html.

DIPLOMAS: The percentage of Americans over 25 with high school diplomas has soared, jumping from 55 percent in 1970 to 83 percent in 1998. A quarter of adults now have a college degree. For more: www.census.gov/Press-Release/cb98-221.html.

ENROLLMENT: The number of students in America's elementary and secondary schools, the U.S. Department of Education reports, has hit an all-time record 53.2 million. For more: http://www.ed.gov/pubs/bbecho99/highlights.html.

SUPPORT SALARIES: In 1997-98, school bus drivers averaged $11.55 an hour, reports the Census Bureau. Custodians took home $10.79 per hour, teacher aides $9.46, and cafeteria workers $8.56. For more: www.census.gov/Press-Release/cb98-226.html.

North Carolina paraeducator Gwen Andrews knows that her work—alongside a certified teacher—directly affects student achievement. "I want to be a force in building children's self-esteem," says this veteran educator.

Alongside of Excellence

NEA task force seeks recognition and advancement for paraeducators.

Ask NEA members Gwen Andrews and Joe Ramos how their work affects student achievement and their pride will just bowl you over.

"I provide personal attention and help build up students who come in with low self-esteem," says Andrews. She recalls how she and Sherry McDonald, her classroom partner at Konnoak Elementary in Forsyth County, North Carolina, once talked a special education student out of thinking he was stupid.

"We sat this child down and told him he had value and could be anything he wanted to be if he believed in himself," Andrews says. "He's now doing very well in middle school."

"I come from the community," says Ramos, a para at Louis and Clark High School in Spokane, Washington, "and I have tremendous background on the kids sent to our traffic safety class."

Like other educators, Ramos and his teaching partner know the thrill of breaking through to students, "when you see the light in their eyes and a smile, and know that they get it."

As veteran paraeducators (*para* meaning *alongside*), Andrews and Ramos know their collaboration with certified staff is as essential to quality as the teamwork of a paralegal and a lawyer or a paramedic and a physician.

More than 500,000 paraeducators now work in American public school classrooms and libraries, primarily serving kids from low-income families or those with disabilities or foreign language backgrounds. Yet the U.S. Department of Education reports that only 13 states have any sort of para credentialing system in place.

"You can't just come in off the street and do this job anymore," says Ramos. "Paras are as valuable in the education family as everybody else."

Advocating top-notch para training, a career ladder, and compensation to match, Joe Ramos has joined Gwen Andrews and other seasoned veterans on NEA's 20-member Paraeducator Task Force.

Panel members have an extensive wish list—everything from an NEA training package to a paraeducator information clearinghouse. But their initial charges are to:

• **Gain recognition for paraeducators.** Far too many paraeducators tell Andrews, an ESP leader in the North Carolina Association of Educators, that teachers and principals don't respect them for the decisions they make because they are not deemed to be "professional" employees.

"Paras need respect for what they do," Andrews declares. "Each year their job becomes more complex."

• **Educate paras on the requirements of the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act.** Through a video, manual, and brochure, the task force will send out the word that IDEA requires training and supervision of support staff who work with disabled kids and allows these employees to work with regular ed students. In addition, these materials will also advise paras on how

"You can't come in off the street and do this job anymore. Paraeducators are as valuable in the education family as everybody else."

—Washington State para Joe Ramos

FACTS & FIGURES

Total U.S. public school enrollment increased by more than 16 percent over the past decade and is projected to rise by another 3 percent by 2008. Needed: some 6,000 new schools.

(Source: NEA Research)

15-Minute Activist

■ **The Goal:** Back Congress off its plans to slash federal education funding by 10-13 percent for the next fiscal year.

■ **Your Assignment:** Urge your members of Congress to support a 15 percent increase in FY 2000 education spending, including support for Title I, IDEA, safe and drug-free schools, professional development, class size reduction, after-school learning centers, and Pell Grants.

• Tell lawmakers how a federally assisted program has helped you bolster student achievement.

• Remind members of Congress that current education appropriations—just 2 percent of the total federal budget—aren't keeping up with school needs.

■ **Here's How:** E-mail your members of Congress through NEA's Legislative Action Center at www.nea.org/lac, or call the U.S. Capitol switchboard at 202/224-3121.

THE BOTTOM LINE

FIREARMS: Nearly 4,000 students were expelled for bringing a gun to school in 1997-98, a 31 percent drop from the year before. Ten percent of those expelled were in elementary schools. For more: www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/SDFS/news.html.

KIDS AND CRIME: Serious violent crime that involves juvenile offenders is down 40 percent since 1993, reports a new federal review of children's well-being. For more: www.connectforkids.org/benton_topics1544/benton_topics_show.htm?doc_id=15849.

MORE CRIME: Fewer than 1 percent of the 7,000 children murdered in 1992-93, the most recent year with full stats, were killed at school. Between 1993 and 1996, overall criminal incidents in schools dropped 22 percent. For more: www.ctredpol.org.

TEST SCORES: The 1990s have proved a record decade for college-bound students taking the ACT exam. Scores have risen significantly over the decade, as have the numbers of students tested, with nearly 164,000 more than in 1989. For more: www.act.org.

Christine Rucker

to push states to write and deliver guidelines for para training and how to apply for federal professional development grants.

• **Promote state standards for paraeducators.** The task force is producing a manual on how to develop state "competencies," or standards, that address career ladders, alternative routes to teacher certification, and improved paraeducator skills.

• **Collaborate with the National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals in Education and Related Services.** This center, affiliated with the City University of New York, is now drafting proposed standards for teacher and para roles on an educational team.

"We're trying to differentiate between tasks that a teacher must perform, like planning lessons, identifying needs, and modifying curricula, and tasks that can be shared with paras," says the center's director, Anna Lou Pickett.

The final standards will serve as federal guidelines for states and local districts as they plan for para roles, supervision, and training. And the standards will also help schools of education devise curricula on working with other adults in the classroom.

In the process, teachers should benefit as much as paraeducators.

Life won't get easier in public education, Pickett predicts. The role of teachers will change, and they'll need people to support them in what they do.

"Almost every other profession recognizes the role of its technicians and has standards for education and training," Pickett stresses. "Paramedic standards certainly don't threaten doctors, and paraeducator standards shouldn't threaten certified teachers." ✔

For more information, contact NEA Paraeducator Task Force coordinator Nesa Chapelle at 202/202-7701 or by E-mail at NChapelle@nea.org. Or visit the National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals Web site at web.gc.cuny.edu/dept/case/nrcp.

KUDOS TO. . .

Eat in Peace. You Earned It.

• **The Caddo (Louisiana) Association of Educators** has finally won a duty-free lunch for all Caddo Parish teachers, including those in elementary schools. The district is hiring 40 aides to cover lunchroom duties and work in the classroom.

• **ESP leaders of the Spring Branch (Texas) Education Association** turned out people for a spring school board meeting and persuaded the board and superintendent to shelve plans to privatize transportation services.

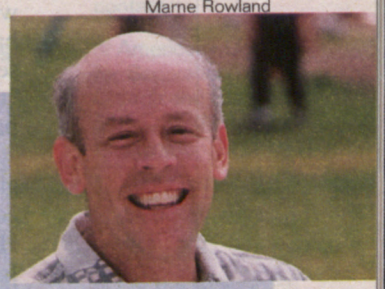
• **Members of Madison (Wisconsin) Teachers, Inc.** have ratified a new two-year contract that provides salary increases of 3.8 percent and 3.7 percent, with a total package increase of 4.2 percent each year—despite state caps on school district revenues and arbitration awards.

• **The Alabama Education Association** has won renewed contracts for 15 Huntsville City teachers who were nonrenewed because of a reported financial crisis that could not be verified by state officials or AEA researchers. AEA analysis showed that the school system should have more than $6.9 million in cash reserves at the end of the next school year.

• Calls and letters from **Massachusetts Teachers Association** members have persuaded legislators to hold for study a bill calling for "competency" testing of all teachers. ✔

Do'ers Profile

Marne Rowland



DAN HARTZ

■ ***Name and profession:*** Dan Hartz, middle school counselor.

■ ***NEA local affiliate:*** Evansville (Indiana) Teachers Association.

■ ***Extracurricular activity:*** Local president.

■ ***Current project:*** Because of his district's past history of bare-knuckles negotiations and a growing desire by the membership for tension reduction, Hartz has developed a more positive relationship with the superintendent to the point of attempting collaborative bargaining.

That means trust, not trading off gains.

"We don't want to give up what we've earned in the past, and we'll still fight for people who have reason to grieve," stresses Hartz. "We're ready to look at things in a whole new way, but we still remember how to do things the old way if this doesn't work."

ETA enjoys solid member support. Membership stands at 95 percent of potential without the help of fair share or agency shop provisions.

■ ***Words of wisdom:*** "As a leader, you've got to be credible with your members and bring them along every step of the way. But you also need to lead them to the edge of their comfort zone to allow them the opportunity to grow."

■ *For more, E-mail Dan Hartz at dphartz@aol.com.*

NEW TEACHERS: More than 20 percent of fledgling teachers exit the profession within three years. Yet school district "induction" efforts currently reach only about half the nation's beginning faculty, says Recruiting New Teachers. For more: www.rnt.org.

JOBS AND KIDS: Three of every 10 high school students 15 and over take home a paycheck, according to the most recent stats. At the college level, six in 10 students have jobs. For more: www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/1999/cb99-124.html.

JOBS AND RISKS: Some 403 youngsters were killed on the job in the mid-1990s, says a new U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics study. Forty percent of the fatalities took place in farming, 20 percent in retail. For more: http://stats.bls.gov/opub/mlr/mlrhome.htm.

NO TV FOR TOTS: The American Academy of Pediatrics is asking parents not to let kids under two watch TV. The rooms of older kids, says the Academy, should be electronic-media free. For more: www.aap.org/family/mediaimpact.htm.

RIGHTS WATCH

Public Schools Winning Voucher Battles in Court

With a string of legal victories this year, the tide in the voucher war has turned in favor of public education.

The legal battle over private school vouchers still rages, but there is encouraging news from the front. Courts have declared vouchers illegal in five states while upholding them in only one. Legal challenges are pending in two other states.

• The most important decision to date: the May 1999 ruling in a Maine case, *Strout v. Albanese,* where the U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit outlawed sectarian school vouchers as a violation of the Establishment Clause of the U.S. Constitution.

"Writ simple, the state cannot be in the business of directly supporting religious schools," Judge Juan Torruella wrote for a unanimous court. Parents have the right "to send their children to sectarian schools," the ruling noted, but "they do not have a right to require taxpayers to subsidize that choice."

The decision effectively bans religious school vouchers in the states that comprise the First Circuit: Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island, as well as Puerto Rico.

Voucher backers are likely to appeal the case to the U.S. Supreme Court.

• Last April, the Maine Supreme Judicial Court ruled that religious school vouchers violate both the federal and the state constitution. "In the entire history of the Supreme Court's struggle to interpret the Establishment Clause," the court said, "it has never concluded that such a direct, unrestricted financial subsidy to a religious school could escape the strictures of the Establishment Clause."

> "Writ simple, the state cannot be in the business of directly supporting religious schools."
>
> — Judge Juan Torruella
> U. S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit

• The Vermont Supreme Court then ruled in June that sectarian school vouchers violate the Vermont constitution, holding that using tax dollars to pay for vouchers runs afoul of a clause in the state constitution prohibiting the government from forcing citizens to "support any place of worship."

• In August, a federal district court in Ohio, acting on a suit brought by NEA and others, struck down the Cleveland voucher plan.

• On the downside, the Wisconsin Supreme Court last year upheld the Milwaukee voucher program, and the U.S. Supreme Court refused to review the case. And in April of this year, the Arizona Supreme Court upheld a program granting taxpayers a tax credit for donations to organizations that provide private school "scholarships."

One of the curious aspects of the current court battles over vouchers is that the U.S. Supreme Court has already ruled on the issue. In the 1973 decision *PEARL v. Nyquist*, the Court squarely held that sectarian school vouchers violate the U.S. Constitution.

In upholding the Milwaukee program, however, the Wisconsin Supreme Court said that *Nyquist* isn't a controlling precedent because the public money is funneled to the religious schools through the parents.

Significantly, the First Circuit Court of Appeals in *Strout* specifically said that the Wisconsin Supreme Court was flat wrong and that *Nyquist* is still the law of the land.

On this count, the importance of the *Strout* holding cannot be overstated. It is a definitive ruling by a federal appellate court—just one level below the Supreme Court—construing the U.S. Constitution to strike down vouchers.

NEA and the affected state affiliates participated in each of these lawsuits. Several other association-sponsored lawsuits are still pending (see On the Docket). ✔

—Michael D. Simpson
NEA Office of General Counsel

On the Docket

Although the legal momentum has shifted in favor of public education advocates and against voucher proponents, state legislatures and even some school districts persist in enacting various voucher schemes. Here's a roundup of pending court challenges:

■ **In Florida, Governor Jeb Bush last June signed into law a massive new voucher program. The next day, a coalition of education advocates—including NEA's Florida affiliate—filed suit challenging the law.**

The nation's first statewide voucher plan gives private school vouchers of $4,000 to $5,000 to parents of children who attended public schools designated by the state as "failing schools" twice in a four-year period. And the program doesn't limit eligibility to low-income families. As a result, up to 156,000 students could receive vouchers for the 2000-01 school year. The cost? From $600 million to $780 million. Where's the money going to come from? From public school districts, by a reduction in state aid for each student who gets a voucher.

■ **In Pennsylvania last October, NEA and PSEA won a state trial court decision striking down a local private school voucher program adopted by the Southeast Delco School District. The court ruled that the district doesn't have the authority under state law to expend money in that way. An appeal is now pending in the Pennsylvania appellate courts.**

THE BOTTOM LINE

PUBLIC OPINION: Good news from the annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup poll. Seventy percent of Americans would rather have tax dollars strengthen public education than pay for private school vouchers. For more: www.pdkintl.org/kappan/kpol9909.htm.

VOUCHERS: Multimillionaire Dick DeVos, the president of Amway, is leading an effort that aims to put a voucher initiative before Michigan voters in 2000. The ballot initiative would repeal a state ban on spending public money for private and religious schools.

SCHOOL MANAGEMENT: The Edison Project, the largest for-profit now managing public schools, says it will run 77 schools with 37,000 students this fall. Edison recently landed a $30 million investment from Microsoft cofounder Paul Allen.

SCIENCE: In the wake of the August anti-evolution vote by the Kansas Board of Ed, the National Academy of Sciences is renewing efforts to combat creationism. The Academy's study, Science and Creationism, is available at www.nap.edu.

INTERVIEW

Barry Lynn On Vouchers

A man of the cloth and the law explains how vouchers violate the Constitution and harm both public *and* private schools.

Scott Suchman

Barry Lynn, the executive director of the Americans United for Separation of Church and State, is an ordained minister, a lawyer, and a passionate advocate for public education. Taxpayer-funded vouchers that help finance religious education, Lynn believes, are blatantly unconstitutional. This veteran advocate for public education is playing a key role in the ongoing efforts to challenge voucher programs in court. He spoke recently with *NEA Today* about how vouchers breach church/state separation and more.

Q: Why is the fight against vouchers so important?
Vouchers are a conduit for funding into religious schools, and this funding raises significant constitutional issues. All voucher programs tend to undercut public education, a good independent reason to oppose them even if the vouchers don't go to religious schools. At Americans United, we see vouchers as a key church/state issue. If you can send tax dollars to religious ministries—and that's what religious schools are—you may as well open federal and state checkbooks to religious institutions directly and to all the other missions and ministries they promote. This step, of course, would be fundamentally at odds with our country's founding values.

Q: What's your view on privately funded voucher programs that offer "scholarships" to help public school parents send their kids to private schools?
In general, these programs come from people who have a vested interest in privatizing education. The advocates of these privately funded "scholarships" admit they're in it for the short-term, perhaps four years at most, just as long as they feel it will take for the public to demand taxpayer-supported vouchers. The real impact of these privately funded voucher programs is sadly demonstrated in San Antonio, where 700 students were given private scholarships and the Edgewood school district lost $4.3 million in state funds. Here was a system that had been turning around, and it's now in trouble again because it lost all of this support.

Q: How do vouchers affect private education?
It's not easy to start a school. When you put new money into a trough, some of the people who come to feed at it have very little interest in education and a lot of interest in making a fast buck. Every voucher experiment so far has seen the creation of fly-by-night schools.

Q: Last spring, Florida Governor Jeb Bush signed voucher legislation into law. What does this new voucher program mean for the rest of the nation?
We're going to see more voucher efforts modeled after the Florida program, which has the initial appeal of dealing only with failing schools. This approach doesn't come across as a giant giveaway to parents who already have their children in private school—although that's what precisely will happen. The political pressure is always there to take programs that start with the poor and expand them to everyone who has a child who wants to attend private school.

Q: Is there a public groundswell for vouchers or are proponents just using smarter political tactics?
It's a matter of smarter political tactics. There is no evidence that there's a groundswell of public interest in vouchers. Vouchers make a very weak "populist" issue because many people, for so many different reasons, have objections to the use of vouchers.

Q: What's your opinion on the recent court rulings on vouchers?
About 40 states are considering or have considered vouchers. Maine's current program was struck down by its Supreme Court. Last May, the Ohio Supreme Court ruled that it was okay to force taxpayers to support religious schools if you route the public funds through parents. That was alarming. However, in August, the federal court in Ohio struck down the Cleveland voucher program. [*Editor's note*: For more on this important court decision, see page 18.] Wisconsin is the only state where the highest court of jurisdiction has ruled in favor of vouchers. If Wisconsin's program had ended up in the U.S. Supreme Court, it is my belief that the resulting decision would have been the end of vouchers.

Q: What's next in the voucher battleground?
I think the issue will get to the Supreme Court within the next three years. I believe the Court, as constituted today, would rule vouchers unconstitutional as a violation of church/state separation. If the make-up of the Court changes or the decision runs in favor of vouchers, I think there would be a spurt of new voucher programs. Ultimately, I think there would be a repudiation of vouchers, because they just don't work.

Q: What's the most misleading claim made by voucher proponents?
Their most misleading claim is that vouchers will benefit inner-city schools. There's no evidence that vouchers make any academic difference and plenty of evidence that at-risk kids have better programs that could be funded right in their own public schools.

Q: What can NEA members do, at the local level, to help the public better understand how vouchers threaten public education?
I think educators need to do a more active job in promoting the value of public schools and their own commitment to public education. There are so many public school success stories that can and need to be told. When these stories are told, vouchers will wither on their own vine.

And I think teachers and school staff really need to help the public become aware that there are quality programs out there that aren't being funded—programs public school educators could use to do their jobs even better, if they could just get a public commitment for adequate funding. ✔

RESOURCES

- To learn more about Barry Lynn and new private school voucher legislation, contact:
- Americans United for Separation of Church and State 518 C St., N.E. Washington, D.C. 20002
- On the Web: www.au.org
- For the latest information on the fight against vouchers visit NEA's Web site at www.nea.org/vouchers/index.html

Learning

Animal Abuse Put On a Short Leash

Children who abuse animals may be exhibiting warning signs that they're a threat to people, too.

Animal abuse, as an indicator of a student's potential for violence, often gets mistakenly dismissed as just another warning sign of trouble, no more or less significant than a habit like watching bloody videos.

But animal abuse should never be dismissed. It's a significant red flag, says Kim Roberts of the Humane Society of America.

"When students engage in animal abuse, they have moved into a higher-risk category for continued violence," she says. "We have a warning sign that must be taken seriously."

Students involved in school shootings in Colorado, Oregon, Arkansas, and Mississippi had histories of animal abuse. Some even bragged about their crimes.

"And in all those cases, no one I know of reported the animal cruelty," says Roberts, the manager of the Humane Society's First Strike Campaign.

Launched in 1997, the campaign brings together educators, law enforcement, the Humane Society, and prosecutors. Its goal: to ensure that laws against animal cruelty are enforced.

Educators are in key positions to detect animal cruelty, says Roberts. They may overhear a conversation, be told about an incident by another student, or witness it directly—on the playground, for example. But what should educators do in these situations?

"Go to the counselor," advises Roberts. "Ask if there have been other reports. Tell the local humane agency what you heard. You can help build a history that makes it easier to know when to take seriously a threat to kill people."

Scott Suchman

Adds Roberts: "If a child is torturing animals, you have an opportunity to get that child into counseling. A happy, healthy, well-adjusted child does not abuse animals."

What's Next:
The Humane Society encourages educators to teach compassion for animals in the classroom. *KIND News,* a monthly newspaper for elementary students, is a good learning tool.

For More:
Contact the Humane Society of the United States, 2100 L St. N.W., Washington, DC 20037, 888/213-0956, or E-mail fstrike@ix.netcom.com. To subscribe to *KIND News,* call the National Association for Humane and Environmental Education at 860/434-8666. ✔

Trends

Newer math textbooks for middle school students rate higher than their well-established counterparts, according to a recent study by Project 2061 of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

The math and science reform project's rigorous analysis of 12 books gave high marks to four recently published series. Among the criteria for the evaluation: how well the books support teacher efforts to help students learn.

For reports on the books, contact Project 2061, AAAS, 1333 H Street, NW, P.O. Box 344467, Washington, DC 20005. 202/326-6666.

Getting Wise to Joe Camel

Innovator: Wanda Brown

Job:
Seventh grade social studies teacher, Tse Ho Tso Middle School, Fort Defiance, Arizona

Adam Harju

Bright Idea:
Drive from the Navajo Nation into Gallup, New Mexico, and you'll see a billboard featuring a beautiful Native American woman—with a bottle of cheap wine in her back pocket.

"It doesn't look good," says Wanda Brown, who is half Navajo.

Her students shared that reaction. So Brown decided to fight back—through "MediaSharp," a two-week curriculum unit created by the NEA Health Information Network, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and other groups.

The program teaches young people how to become savvy media analysts. Students learn how advertising portrays alcohol and tobacco use as a natural, even a glamorous, part of everyday life.

Brown eagerly signed up for the training because of the growing problems she sees on the reservation. Drinking and smoking are beginning at younger and younger ages.

As part of the MediaSharp unit, Brown's students went into the community looking for billboards and advertisements that glamorize smoking and drinking—especially to the Native American audience.

The kids were excited by the project—and the chance to watch television for homework. They hadn't realized before how much the media contribute to early use of alcohol.

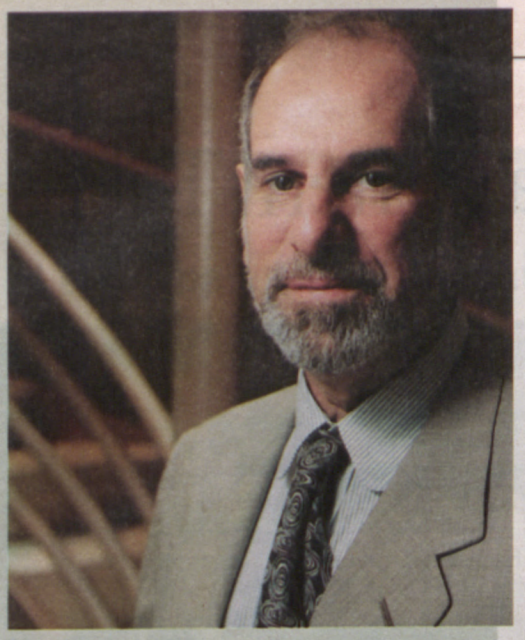
"My students were fed up with ads appealing to kids, especially Joe Camel cartoons," she says.

Impact:
Brown was so pleased with the program that she shared the training and materials she received with colleagues. The NEA Health Information Network has held two training sessions and distributed 800 copies of the MediaSharp video and curriculum guide nationwide.

For more:
The MediaSharp kit (leader's guide and video) is available free from the Centers for Disease Control by calling 770-488-5705 (press #2) or by E-mailing tobaccoinfo@cdc.gov. For more information, visit www.cdc.gov/tobacco or www.health.org. ✔

Calculating how much credentials matter

Students achieve at higher levels, says new research released by the Charles Dana Center at the University of Texas, when classrooms have qualified teachers. But the Dana Center's director, Dr. Uri Treisman, says getting more certified teachers in classrooms is only a part of what's needed to narrow the gaps among different student populations.



Mark Matson

How clear is the correlation between teacher certification and student achievement?

In elementary schools where less than 70 percent of the staff is certified, there's a negative effect on student achievement, especially among Hispanic and economically disadvantaged children.

In some subjects, like algebra I, we found what you would expect: Students do better with teachers with experience in the discipline they're teaching. Algebra I passing rates for all middle school students in Texas, regardless of race, ethnicity, or economic status, are higher in schools where more than 68 percent of teachers are certified.

The overwhelming issue: Is the person teaching algebra actually an English teacher who's only one page ahead of the class?

What's the outlook?

If you look at schools with many poor children, there are fewer certified teachers in subjects, like algebra, that matter a lot.

But with higher standards and so many more children taking algebra, there's no hope of having enough certified teachers over the next five years. Math majors have to choose between making $25,000 teaching and $50,000 working in the computer industry. You can't organize an educational system based on people's willingness to make that kind of charitable contribution.

Children will benefit as teaching becomes more of a profession. The fight for credentialing requirements is a symbol of this professionalism.

But we should allow more flexible paths to certification. With mentoring, people with subject expertise can teach while they work toward certification.

You say students overcome disadvantages through accelerated instruction, not slower-paced remediation. Explain.

Obviously the circumstances of children's lives matter, and there's a high correlation between family income, parental education, and student performance. What's exciting is that states, school districts, and schools have figured out how to reduce those correlations.

At the core of all the strategies that work is the understanding that if kids haven't had certain experiences or much success, they need a lot more experiences and a lot more success. We need to identify what kids know and build on those strengths, intensify instruction, and create social environments that respect who kids are and help them make positive choices. ✔

For more information:
Check www-tenet.cc.utexas.edu/Pub/dana/index.html

Girl Power Clicks Here

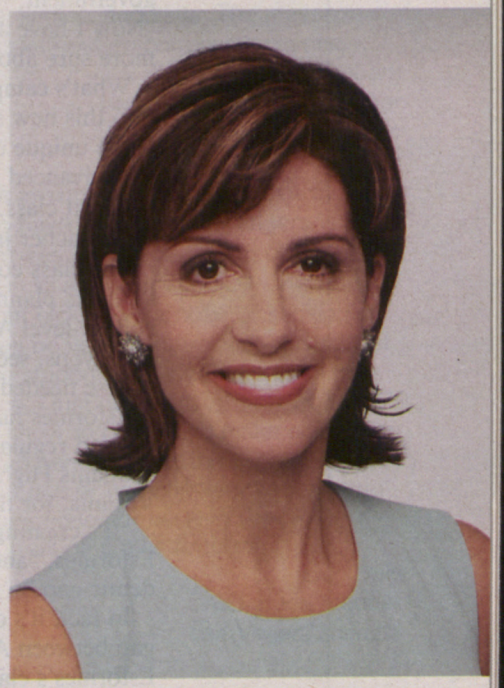
Innovator: Katrina Garnett
Founder, president, and CEO of CrossWorlds Software, Inc. and the Garnett Foundation in Burlingame, California.

Bright Idea:

To address the underrepresentation of women in the computer sciences, high-tech CEO Katrina Garnett has launched a program to introduce teenagers to the wide range of possibilities in the field. Her two-year-old "Backyard Project" now hosts a Web site offering career information for teenage girls, assorted field trips, and an annual summer computer camp.

The camp introduces teenage girls to women in the field and eradicates the stereotypical "nerdy" image many girls hold about women in the computer industry.

Last year, 24 girls attended the five-day Backyard Camp at Stanford University, the "only one of its kind for girls this focused," says Garnett.



Katherine Ledner

On arrival, the campers make their own business cards. They then learn how to handle an interview, "toot their horn," present themselves with "power and pizzazz," and choose the right college.

The girls also meet a variety of role models, women in jobs ranging from marketing to multimedia, from sales to computer programming.

Mornings offer the girls hands-on programming instruction and a chance to release excess energy through Tai Chi and shadow boxing.

"The girls come with a stereotypical image of women who work in the industry—that they're geeky, nerdy, unfeminine," says Garnett. "There aren't any TV shows that show the computer industry as a glamorous place to work."

After camp, Garnett adds, the girls realize how many options they have—and that working in the computer sciences doesn't mean having to work alone in cubicles. The girls realize that they can work in teams and be creative.

This year, Garnett expects 150 students to explore new career paths at her camp, and, she says, the Foundation will award scholarships to about 60 percent of them.

But Garnett worries about girls coming out of school who are unprepared for the job market and the new world of computers.

"Girls in school don't know what jobs are available in the computer industry," she points out. "This camp helps kids learn what opportunities exist. Even if they don't learn a lot of programming, the experience will demystify the industry."

What's Next:

Garnett hopes to take her camp to a national level at some point—extending it out first to Austin, Texas and Boston, Massachusetts, areas where she has surveyed girls to learn why they weren't pursuing careers in computer science.

Her survey findings—that even in Silicon Valley and other regions with heavy concentrations of high-tech businesses, girls have little or no information about jobs in computers—figure to help put the Backyard Project on the national map.

For More:

Contact Andrea Jepson, the Garnett Foundation's acting director, at 650/685-8781 or check the Web at www.backyard.org. ✔

NEA Innovators

If tested, NEA staffer Glen Cutlip would get an A+ for his knowledge and experience with student assessment, standards, and teacher accountability. He's currently editing a three-book series on the pros and cons of various assessment procedures. The books will help educators determine the most appropriate processes for their students.

Cutlip became an advocate for underachieving students early in his teaching career, where he specialized in reading at first the junior high and then the community college level.

Later, as basic skills director for state education boards in West Virginia and Maryland, Cutlip sharpened his knowledge.

For more information on Cutlip's assessment series, check the NEA Professional Library Web site at www.nea.org/books.

Advanced Placement Takes Center Stage

A Virginia teacher mixes AP and regular students to create critical thinkers.

Eighteen-year-old Andrew Lyons didn't know much about constitutional law before this year. Now he sits in his seventh period government class and, after a thoughtful debate, confidently casts a vote on an imagined piece of legislation about juveniles in court.

"I had preconceived notions about politics and government," says Lyons. "Now I have a base, and I'm more sure about my ideas."

What's catapulted Lyons into this new self-assurance is the unique composition of his Advanced Placement government class, led by longtime teacher Jack Esformes.

The class comprises both students planning to take the college-level AP exam and students, like Lyons, seeking regular credit for a course needed to graduate.

Esformes has taught classes that mix AP and regular students at T.C. Williams High School in Alexandria, Virginia, for the past five years.

"It's creating critical thinkers," says Esformes, "and helping to close an academic gap."

In fact, it's difficult to discern any gap between AP and regular students in Esformes's classes. Nearly all students pay rapt attention to the energetic Esformes and fire back replies to his ongoing demand to consider both sides of every issue.

Students seeking regular credit in the mixed classes that Esformes teaches feel more motivated—and their grades usually improve. AP students in his mixed classes, meanwhile, tend to achieve just as well as AP students in exclusive AP classes.

Both regular and AP students also report that they leave the mixed classes with a deeper understanding of viewpoints from other social and academic backgrounds.

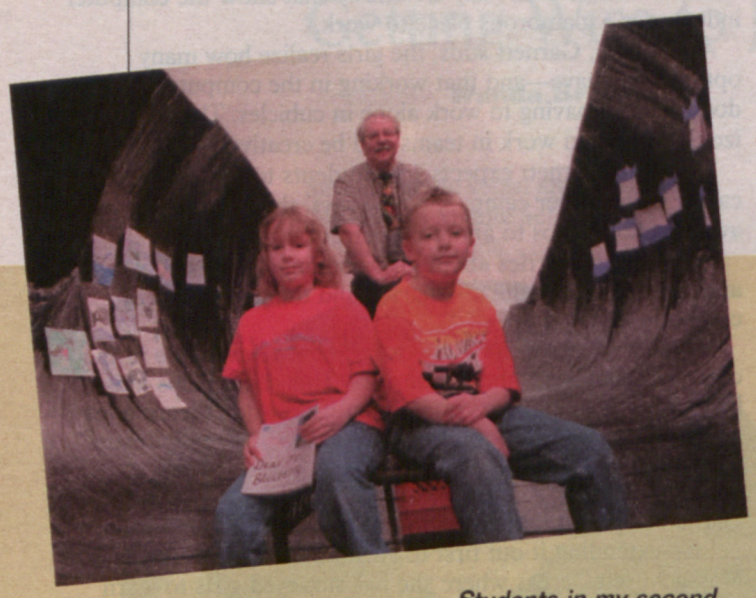
"Kids need model leaders, higher expectations from teachers, and the chance to see how others think and act," says Esformes, who'll retire this year after 31 years in the profession. "Students see others getting involved and getting good grades, and they begin to want to do the same."

Esformes can cite numerous parents who have expressed gratitude to him for helping their children recover their self-esteem and motivation. Teens who used to avoid class participation, fearing being labeled as nerds, now join in intense, complex debates on topics ranging from freedom of speech to school violence.

"This class has given me a better perspective of how others think," says T.C. Williams High senior Madeleine LaPointe. "It also helps the smarter kids see that those who are lower achievers can do better academically."

Sandy Schaeffer

NEA member Jack Esformes lectures to students of all levels in his Advanced Placement class.



How I Did It

Nick Dalrymple
Second grade teacher
Sidney Grade School, Illinois

Students in my second grade class displayed their schoolwork inside a 50-foot-long whale. As many as 60 viewers fit into the whale to view science charts, artwork, and essays dealing with the ocean, the second grade theme.

The construction of a life-sized juvenile sperm whale was the climax of our study on whales. The students used 2,000 square feet of plastic sheeting, several rolls of clear tape, and a box fan. The immensity of the building materials made us realize just how big "really big" is.

Besides being an exciting project, building the model whale helped the second graders meet the Illinois State Learning Standards by incorporating teamwork and problem solving. It was as much a science project as it was a math project.

Before we started on the final model, a smaller one was built. In-class teams had to measure the different proportions of the whale and determine how much material would be needed when the bigger whale was made. Math skills learned in class solved many problems encountered during the construction. And with problems that couldn't be solved, students learned how to overcome obstacles.

To our surprise a single fan was able to inflate the whole structure. The students and I had figured that several fans would be needed, but by carrying out this experiment we learned the benefits of the wind. The students also got to learn more about air pressure and density.

After more than a week's worth of hard work, the whale was finally completed. Inside the whale, students displayed their art work and writing assignments about ocean life. We had whale books exhibited and some of the students read the stories

Esformes traces his interest in teaching classes of mixed achievers to his dislike of student tracking. A decade ago, as a middle school teacher, he noticed that regular students mixed with gifted students felt "pushed harder to do better."

A few years later, Esformes convinced his principal that "it was hypocritical to teach representative democracy in elite surroundings" and began teaching his untracked AP class.

To avoid possible opposition from the parents of AP students, Esformes created his mixed class by making AP student participation voluntary.

The mixed classes include 28 students, seven AP and 21 regular students. They've become so popular that last fall Esformes had to use a lottery to pick the 35 AP students from among 66 applicants who wanted to take the class.

AP students in the mixed classes read a different textbook and get different homework assignments and tests. In class, both regular and AP students join in the lively debate.

"It's like an orchestra," says Esformes. "There are different sections, but you need all of them to make music."

"It's an interactive class, and it makes me look at both sides of an issue," says AP senior Jennifer Ungar.

Esformes, adds student Kasheim Brown, always brings up hot topics.

"The class keeps me from dozing off," he jokes, "and it's motivated me to do a lot better."

"This class helps close the information gap and reduces the chance of future misunderstandings," sums up Esformes. "What I want students to take away most is that every idea is an idea worth hearing." ✔

For more: Contact Jack Esformes at jrteach@aol.com.

aloud to visitors. We also had whale sounds playing in the background to lend atmosphere.

The students led other classes and parents on tours through the whale, explaining to them concepts such as echo location. The whale project was so popular that we were even asked to display the whale at the local mall.

The serendipitous benefits of the project make it one that ranks near the top in my 20 years of teaching. First grade students and their parents are already asking me, "What are we going to do next year?" I've got a few ideas...

For more: Visit the Web at www.prairienet.org/~ndalrym/school.html

[DILEMMA]

How do you help students with their personal hygiene?

I show students who require assistance a "Hygiene Self-Monitoring Form." The form contains boxes to check off for each day of the week, once they have showered, shampooed hair, brushed teeth, brushed hair, used deodorant, and put on clean clothes. For some students, I include a place for parent signature. The student brings the form to school each day, and I make sure it remains private. The form preserves the dignity of the student and — after a very short time — the steps become habit.

Laurie Chamberlain
Special education teacher
St. Louis County, Missouri

■ I stress handwashing in my kindergarten classroom. I have signs in my bathroom and by the sink to remind students to wash their hands. Throughout the year, I do things to renew their interest in handwashing. For example, I teach them that they should scrub with soap for as long as it takes to sing the ABC's. It is quite amusing to walk past our restrooms and hear a chorus of the alphabet song.

Diane Postman
Kindergarten teacher
Poquoson, Virginia

■ I had a student with severe hygiene problems. After lunch, he was often covered with chocolate or some other food. As I walked down the hall, I would quietly suggest to him that he wash his face in the bathroom. Key to the success of this was the child's trust that I would not do anything to embarrass him. He and I would discuss his issues quietly, and his mother would follow up at home. The school nurse also aided the effort by offering privacy and support.

Carol Berlin
Third grade teacher
Framingham, Massachusetts

■ My fifth grade class and I spend about two weeks on a maturation unit in the spring and — with that in mind — early in the school year, I talk to them about their growing bodies and my sensitive nose. Many students don't realize the changes that are taking place in their bodies. For a couple of weeks after the talk, I assign baths, use of deodorant, etc. for homework. Parents love this and are forewarned about the assignment at Back to School Night during the first week of school.

Sue Kast
Fifth grade teacher
Pleasanton, California

■ I start with a discussion of the primitive bathing practices in Elizabethan times. This conversation is used in conjunction with Shakespeare's plays. The students display the difference in hygiene between "then and now" in posters, raps, jingles, and skits. The message comes across without embarrassing anyone.

Nancy Blumenberg
High school English teacher
Arvada, Colorado

■ Third grade seems to be the year that students want to have their hands or fingers in their mouths and noses. At the beginning of the year, I introduce them to a "finger check."

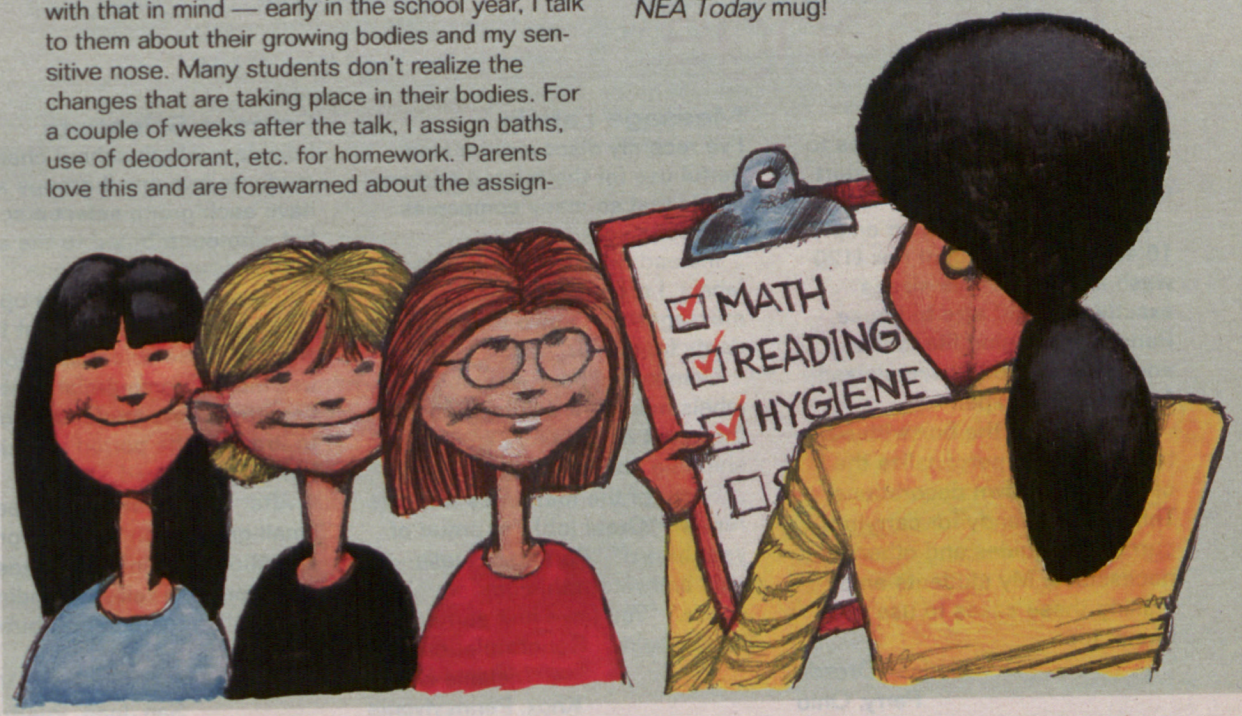
Being caught picking your nose or sucking on your finger can be very embarrassing. Instead of identifying the student with the finger in an inappropriate place, I just quietly say, "finger check." My students know to check and make sure that their hands and pencils are in the proper place. This saves the one or two children that are actually picking their noses or sucking their fingers from having attention drawn to them.

Lisa Hale
Third grade teacher
Las Vegas, Nevada

Got An Answer?

The question for next month is: How do you develop critical thinking skills in students who just want "the right answer"?
Send your answer by regular mail to *NEA Today*, Fax 202/822-7206, or E-mail to dilemma2@neatoday.nea.org. Please include your name, city, state, job title and grade level, if applicable.

Published respondents will receive a bright *NEA Today* mug!



Ted Pitts

Time–For a Change

Using Interest-Based Bargaining, Kansas teachers gain time for professional

Having regular meetings where colleagues can share strategies and ideas to improve student learning is, most educators would agree, the professional way to go. But who has the time?

In Lawrence, Kansas, NEA members have found a way to make time.

That time was created at the bargaining table. Using the approach known as "Interest-Based Bargaining," the Lawrence Education Association has negotiated "collaboration time," which was implemented last year.

Now, one afternoon each week, all Lawrence elementary and junior high school teachers have 90 minutes to plan and discuss problems together.

Collaboration time "is a fabulous idea," says LEA President Wayne Kruse, a third grade teacher. "It really helps us meet the needs of all the students in our classroom."

Last year, for example, third grade teachers at Kruse's school collaborated to help a colleague deal with an extremely disruptive student.

"We devised a list of interventions that included all of us," he explains, "so it just wasn't one teacher trying to help this student."

Among the list of ideas generated in the collaboration time: having the disruptive child—who had a troubled home life—become a helper to a special needs student.

"Within a month," says Kruse, "the disruptive kid was not having the outbursts."

This year, Lawrence third grade teachers are using collaboration time to help eight students who are reading below grade level.

Collaboration time has helped make "lots of creative things happen," notes Lois Orth-Lopes, immediate past-president of Lawrence's NEA local.

One junior high school used the time to plan quarterly cross-subject activities. An Asian culture day, for example, included events in art, math, science, music, and drama.

Last year, Orth-Lopes points out, the community pitched in to provide constructive activities for students who were released early on collaboration days. Arts and recreation organizations offered a variety of new activities.

But there were kinks to work out. Some teachers felt they lost personal planning time or had to come to work earlier. Junior highs found it difficult to wedge collaboration time equitably into an eight-period day. Some principals were more flexible than others about how to spend the time.

And parents, particularly those trying to get off welfare, found themselves with employers who are not particular-

Dave Eulitt

Lawrence, Kansas, teacher Haley Bruns has found that increased time with her colleagues means better results in her kindergarten classroom.

Idea Exchange

Box Recycling

I recycle Tide detergent boxes to make portable file boxes or portfolio cases.

First, I start out with an empty 16.43 pound detergent box (120 wash load size). This size is exactly the right size to house Pendaflex hanging file folders and other portfolio covers sized for letter-size paper.

Next, I cover the box with contact paper and personalize the case with my own decorations. This case is handy for carrying curriculum guides and other necessities. My students enjoy making these cases to use at home, too.

Carleen Drozda
Perry, Ohio

Message Labels

I've recently discovered a wonderful use for the printed address labels that so many companies offer for sale.

Instead of ordering address labels, I order labels that contain messages that I give to my students from me!

Companies have available 600 labels in assorted colors, and they cost as little as $7.95 plus shipping and handling.

Some of the messages that I've run off: "Great job! I'm proud of your effort!" "Parents: Please sign and return this graded paper." "You have just earned bonus points. Congratulations!"

Melanie Finotti
Knox, Pennsylvania

Famous Scientists

I divide my high school chemistry students into small groups and have each group select a scientist who contributed to the atomic theory.

The groups must come up with creative ideas to represent the work of these scientists. Some use music, commercial spots, or comedy. Some students choose to dress in the period in which the scientist lived.

After the performances, each small group then makes a presentation explaining the most important and relevant finding that their scientist contributed to the atomic theory.

Elena Maldonado-Vargas
San Juan, Puerto Rico

Works4Me
NEA's e-mail classroom tip of the week!

Have a great idea? Fax it to *NEA Today* at 202/822-7206 or E-mail: ideas@neatoday.nea.org. For more tips from NEA's weekly E-mail service, Works4Me, send an E-mail to lyris@list.nea.org.

- In the "subject" line, type: sign me up, NEA!
- In the message block, type: subscribe Works4Me
- Send the message.

To submit a tip, E-mail it to: owner-Works4Me@list.nea.org.

collaboration.

ly sympathetic to the problems created when children come home from school early one day a week.

But, despite the problems, the Lawrence Education Association remained committed to making collaboration time an effective tool to improve learning.

"When we work as partners with the administration and school board, we can come together and solve problems for the benefit of students, rather than battling each other," says Orth-Lopes.

Collaboration time is just one area

"We can come together for the benefit of students, rather than battling each other."

where LEA members are using Interest-Based Bargaining to address educational problems. LEA is also negotiating over other issues ranging from teacher-student ratios to assessments.

"We're helping teachers and schools use the data provided by assessments," says LEA's Wayne Kruse, the third grade teacher who co-chairs the assessment committee. "We're helping teachers understand what assessments can tell us about our kids."

The district's newest product of Interest-Based Bargaining is a peer-assistance program set to launch this fall. LEA's long-term goal: to provide paid-release time for enough teachers to help all new hires.

"The majority of teachers like the idea that we are communicating in a civil way about issues," says former LEA President Orth-Lopes. "But we do have members who are more comfortable in an adversarial role, who feel we aren't making the gains we could be making monetarily. Frankly, that's been a challenge for us." ✔

For more information: Call Wayne Kruse at 785/864-2795 or E-mail wkruse@usd497.k12.ks.us

Recommended Resources

Murphy, Carlene. 1997. "Finding Time for Faculties to Study Together," *Journal of Staff Development*,18 (3), 29-32.

It's About Time! A Report from the NEA National Center for Innovation. Washington, D.C., 1993.

Raywid, Mary Anne. 1993. "Finding Time for Collaboration," *Educational Leadership*, 30-34.

[DILEMMA]

How do you establish an effective partnership between a teacher and a paraprofessional?

Last year, I had the pleasure of working with a paraprofessional because I had two classified students assigned to me, both with very different needs. I first explained my approach to running my classroom when it came to things like student behavior and noise levels.

Then, I explained what I saw as her role for the two students she was assigned, as well as the other students. I made sure she knew I regarded us as a team, not as a teacher and an aide.

I asked her to tell me her expectations, and what worked and didn't work with other teachers she'd been assigned to.

We developed an open relationship and a system of eye and hand signals to get each other's attention silently during class.

From day one, the students are introduced to the paraprofessional as another adult in the room, equally in charge.

Terry Castoria
Fifth grade teacher
Marlboro, New Jersey

Ted Pitts

■ It helps to have a common goal that both are aware of. And it helps to make sure that both understand the other person's role—that is, what the teacher needs to attain the goal, and what assistance the parapro needs to provide the teacher and students in reaching that goal.

Both the teacher and the paraprofessional need to be willing to listen and make changes for the good of the students. They both need to understand that constructive criticism is a valuable tool, and that personalities and personal feelings need to be kept aside.

Pat Tozer
Middle school guidance secretary
Fairless Hills, Pennsylvania

■ By treating paraprofessionals with respect, they become your biggest allies and advocates in the classroom. I involve my aide with parent conferences, include her in some lesson planning, and let her know through occasional notes how much I appreciate her.

From what she's told me, this paraprofessional and many of her colleagues are looked down on by teachers. She may not have a college degree, but she's priceless to my students and me.

Martina Fegan
High school English teacher
Mercersburg, Pennsylvania

■ Never disagree with your paraprofessional in front of the students. If there is a difference of opinion, then work on another activity until you have discussed the problem in private.

Offer support. If one of you has disciplined a student, that same person should see the problem to conclusion. For example, if the teaching assistant gives a "time out," the assistant should also release the child from time out.

If students see mutual respect between their teachers, they will have equal respect for them.

Carol Jacobs
Special education teacher
Chestnut Ridge, New York

■ With each paraprofessional I work with (and I've worked with as many as four at at time), I take the time to learn who they are and how they learn. We've all attended those in-services that identify our learning styles. It's important to know the para's learning style, too.

I let them know they are a valued member of the staff. I include them in important meetings. They are usually held when they are technically off duty, but I arrange with my principal to shift their duty time so they can attend.

I also provide a detailed daily schedule. The paraprofessional knows exactly what to do and when to do it. The schedule needs altering frequently, and the paraprofessionals are valuable when solving a change in the schedule.

Patsy Wagner
Special education teacher
Aurora, Colorado

■ I always treat my paraprofessional as a teammate. I keep her apprised of what my goals are and get her input on what she thinks would help. We then discuss where we are and where we're going, and then devise a plan for each student.

I'm also very conscientious about sharing student progress with the paraprofessional. They like to see that what they're doing brings results.

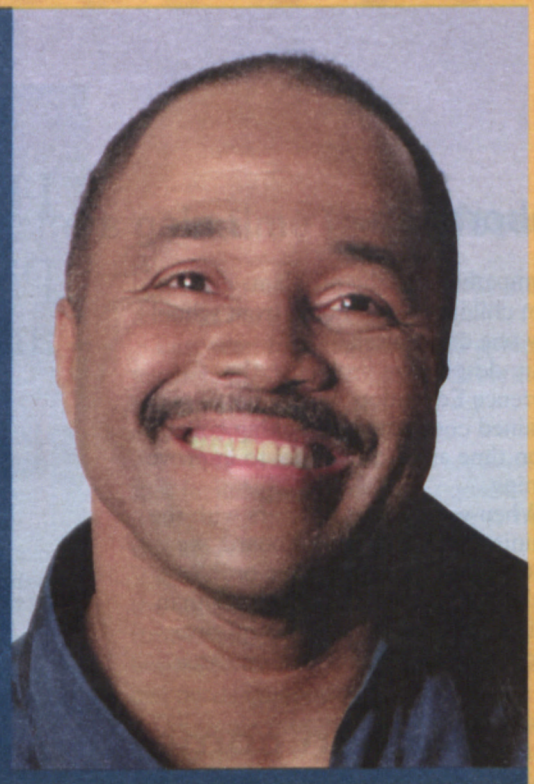
Lyna Kittelmann
Third grade teacher
Payette, Idaho

Got An Answer?

What do you do to make life easier for a teacher new to the profession?

Send your answer by regular mail, Fax 202/8227206, or E-mail to dilemma2@neatoday.nea.org. Please include your name, city, state, job title and grade level, if applicable.

Published respondents will receive a bright *NEA Today* mug!



How Can We Make A Difference for Children and Public Education?

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Find Out More

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The Political Action Committee of the National Education Association

Adult Literacy Helps Parents Help Children

A Florida program makes parents better learning partners for their kids.

"My students are extremely sensitive to reading instruction," says Susan Doss-Sheater, an adult education teacher in Pensacola, Florida, "so I teach reading without their knowing I'm teaching it."

Doss-Sheater works with an innovative family education program in Escambia County. This Even Start "Family Intergenerational Literacy Model" gives parents the skills they need to help their children learn to read.

Parents in the Escambia program are taught to perceive reading as a means to an end. These adult students, for instance, learn to write notes to their children's teachers about homework assignments or doctor's appointments. Parents in the program also study to earn their GED.

Doss-Sheater offers parents one-on-one, personalized reading lessons on the computer. She also has her adult students work together as peers. The students sit at tables, where everyone has a chance to teach something.

The Escambia program currently serves about 30 families, with funding coming from both federal aid and Escambia County. The program provides child care, transportation, early childhood education, breakfast and lunch for parents and kids, and classes for parents on topics ranging from job skills to parenting.

"For the school district to be transporting infants and parents in buses was a new area for us," says teacher Linda Harris, the former president of the Escambia Education Association.

The Association played a large role in the program's success. This NEA local affiliate helped arrange flextime hours so teachers could schedule home visits or evening programs.

The local also lobbies for continued funding of the program and has funded a "Rocking Reader Program," where bus drivers read to kids at the program's child care center.

Some of Doss-Sheater's native English-speaking parents start out reading at the second-grade level.

"They may have dropped out in 10th grade," she says, "but they started tuning out in third or fourth grade."

But students like Gail Cirota—who plans to get a high school diploma and become a veterinary assistant—are making big strides.

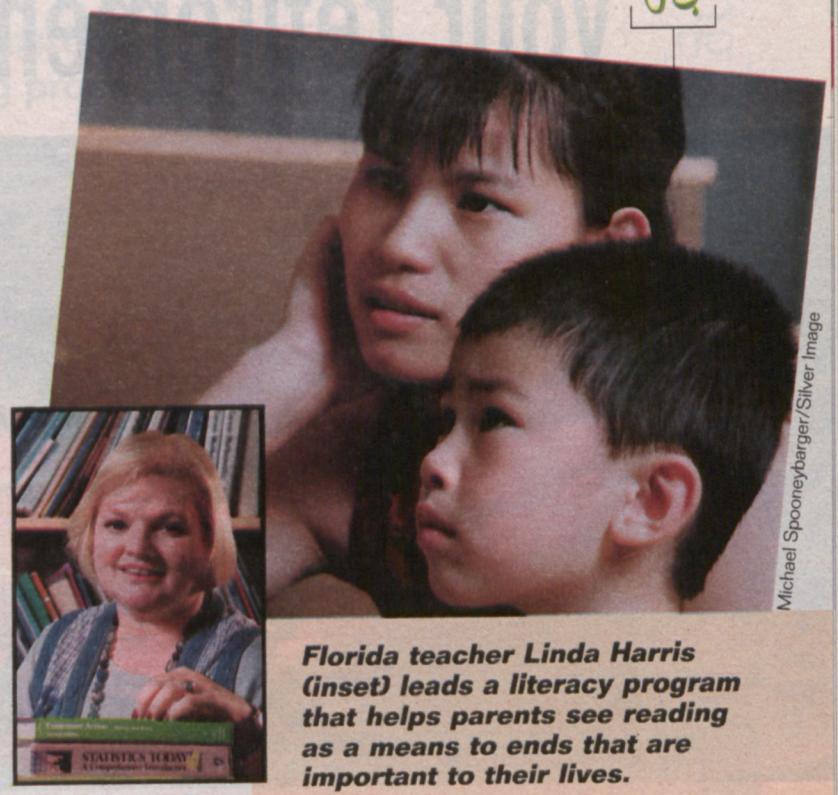
"Now," she says, speaking about her four-year-old daughter Laylana, "we read to each other."

Doss-Sheater expects her parent-students to become teachers.

"Everything I teach, I show them how to teach to their kids," she says.

Student Tuyet Nguyen is convinced her second grade son is doing better in school because she's now able to help with homework.

"He's very smart!" she says, with considerable pride in her voice. ✔



Michael Spooneybarger/Silver Image

Florida teacher Linda Harris (inset) leads a literacy program that helps parents see reading as a means to ends that are important to their lives.

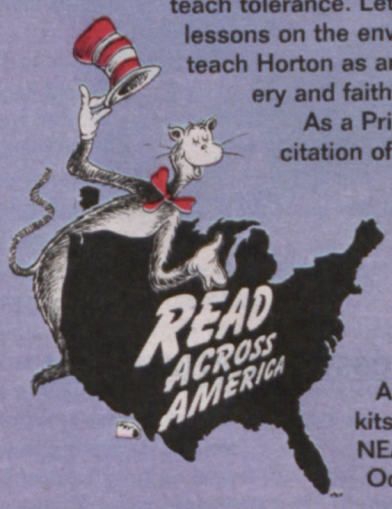
For more on the Escambia program, call 805/595-6932 or 805/595-6946.

Resources:
- **For information on Even Start, call 202/401-8888.**

Let Loose with Dr. Seuss!

Looking for new ideas for NEA's Read Across America on March 2—Dr. Seuss's birthday? Put "Seuss on the Loose!" and wrap your school in the author's magic.

Seuss's characters are filled with whimsy and wisdom. To celebrate his birthday this year, use these characters to teach children lessons about life. Use the Sneetches, for example, to teach tolerance. Let the Lorax lead lessons on the environment. Or teach Horton as an example of bravery and faithfulness.



As a Princeton University citation of Dr. Seuss has noted: "He shows [children] the way to the adult world, as he shows adults the way to the child." Read Across America organizing kits will be mailed to NEA local affiliates in October.

The Cat in the Hat & Dr. Seuss Enterprises, L.P. 1957, 1997 All Rights Reserved.

READING RESOURCES

- The National Research Center on English Learning and Achievement provides online information about practical reading and writing instruction. *The Nature of Effective First Grade Reading Instruction* (Pressley, Allington, et al., 1998) is one of the many useful research reports on the Web site. For information on how to order this and other reports, visit http://cela.albany.edu.

- The National Association for the Education of Young Children and the International Reading Association have published a joint position statement that outlines expectations for children in preschool through third grade. To order *Learning to Read and Write: Developmentally Appropriate Practices for Young Children*, call IRA at 800/336-READ, ext. 266. Or download the information from the NAEYC Web site at http://naeyc.org.

- The *NAEP 1998 Reading Report Card for the Nation and States*, a report from the National Assessment of Educational Progress in Reading, is now available from the National Center for Education Statistics. For a $25 copy, contact New Orders, Superintendent of Documents, P.O. Box 371954, Pittsburgh, PA 12520-7954, and ask for stock number 065-000-01251-1. Or visit http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/index.asp to see the report on the Web.

- The Web site of the National Council of Teachers of English has information available on its upcoming convention in Denver, November 18-23. For more information, visit www.ncte.org.

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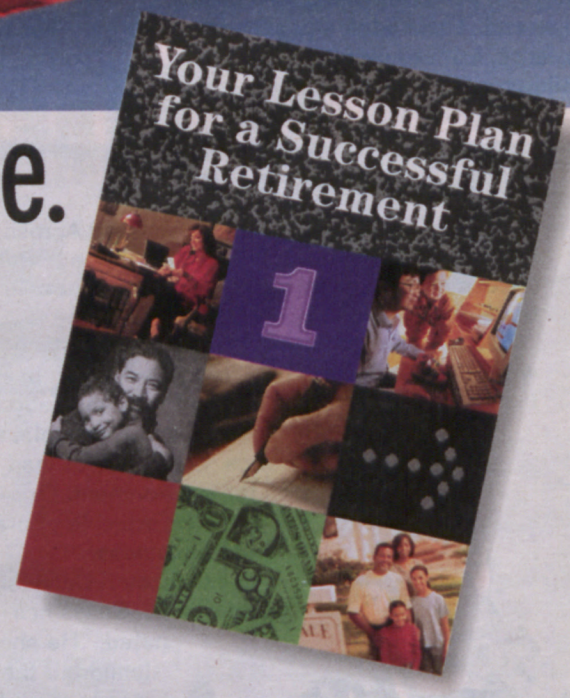

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Computers: The Secrets For Classroom Success

New research suggests that computers in the classroom may be playing a more central role in the learning process.

At last count, America's 109,000 elementary and secondary schools had 8 million computers for use in instruction, about one computer for every six students. Many of these computers, unfortunately, are merely hunks of hardware.

In other schools, meanwhile, computer technology is adding real value to the learning process. In this month's FYI, NEA Today *explores the new research that examines these successful schools and the lessons they can teach.*

What's so special about the new research on using classroom computers?

Until recently, the use of classroom computers hadn't progressed much beyond the toddler stage. But how teachers use computers has really started to evolve, and now we have research that talks intelligently about this.

Among the most promising new research is that of a team that's spent four years studying schools which have received technology grants from the USWest Foundation. The three—Lin Foa, Michael Johnson, and Richard Schwab, who's now the dean of education at the University of Connecticut—have visited over 100 schools and talked to thousands of teachers.

What happens when teachers start trying to integrate technology into their teaching?

Many teachers just starting out with computers typically "patch" the new technology over their traditional teaching approaches.

A teacher, for instance, might use PowerPoint to project key lecture points onto a screen instead of writing those same points on the chalkboard. Or a teacher might assign students to find facts on the Internet instead of sending them to a book.

Teachers who go down this road are essentially using high-tech tools to meet traditional instructional expectations. Their teaching remains based on the lecture-textbook-term paper model, only in digital form.

What can change when teachers move beyond the technology beginner's stage?

To be glib, everything.

More and more teachers are using technology to *transform* their teaching. In their classrooms and in their schools, textbooks are less central to instruction, students are more actively involved in learning, and interactions outside traditional classroom boundaries are standard operating procedure.

Is anybody really making technology work in new ways that are worth the effort?

Yes. Researchers Foa, Johnson, and Schwab like to cite a New Mexico high school as an example of the transformative potential of technology.

Three teachers at this school collaborated on a project based on their town's historic city center. They used a textbook as a starting point, but it quickly became just a referece. The curriculum content, note the researchers, actually "originated completely outside the textbook, from the students' relevant local environment."

Technology was the key to this transformation. Students created a Web site detailing information on the city center. They developed a digital map of the city plaza, interviewed senior citizens and local historians, researched historical documents, created "virtual" tours, and wrote up essays and short stories.

A student editorial board reviewed and made decisions on the Web site content. Students co-edited each other's writing and trained each other—and teachers—on the technological tools they were using.

Students, in other words, took charge of their learning. They applied problem-solving skills to real-world situations. And the "real world" noticed. The student Web page became a big hit in the community and even went on to win national recognition.

How can one teacher possibly pull off an ambitious technology-based project?

One teacher, alone, can't make miracles happen with technology. The technological world is simply too vast and changing for one person to stay on top of it. Using technology wisely is impossible without collaboration.

And that collaboration means relating to students in new ways. Teachers who are using technology to the max are almost always depending on students to teach other students and even to share knowledge with their teachers.

In these highly evolved, technologically savvy school environments, the traditional teacher-centered classroom is becoming a learning community.

Do we really need technology to create true learning communities?

No. Talented teachers have always been able to go beyond the textbook. But it's usually been hard to get students past the textbook basics.

"In the past," write the researchers, "teachers had to go to the librarian and see what resources might be available in the usually meager school library, and then they marched everyone down the hall to take turns copying the same information from the same encyclopedia."

Note the researchers: "This experience did not enhance a teacher's desire to have students do their own research. Venturing outside the provided textbook became a dreary and exhausting experience for teachers and students."

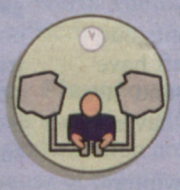
The tools of technology, researchers like Foa, Johnson, and Schwab believe, can help transform that exhaustion to exhilaration. ✔

How Wise Is Your District?

Is your school district or school trying to get more serious about putting computers to good use? Here are three research-based strategies that can lead to success.

Conduct training on-site.

Some districts send staff off-site for one-shot training sessions. Not a smart move. Wise districts offer training on-site and over time.



Provide real-person, real-time tech support.

Some districts try to save money on tech support by expecting teaching staff to E-mail their questions and problems to a "virtual" support center. A prescription for frustration. Wise districts make real people available to do tech set-up and support, on an individualized basis.

Outfit only those who are ready.

Some districts try to impose technology all at once, on everybody in a district or a school. Big waste. Wise districts make technology available for those eager to use it, then let eager users show colleagues just what's possible.

Illustration by Karin Huggens

To learn more . . .

Researchers Foa, Johnson, and Schwab have authored a series of papers on their research. For a bibliography, see www.nea.org/neatoday. Their E-mail addresses: Lin Foa, ifoa@earthlink.net. Michael Johnson, johnsonm @apple.com. Richard Schwab, rschwab@uconnvm.uconn.edu.

TEAMWORK

Maine Paras Give Selves Some Credit

With teachers' help, 'ed techs' address their training needs.

In the southern Maine community of Windham, paraeducators have improved their professional development opportunities by creating their own "local support system." For these educational technicians, as paraeducators are called in Maine, that means *credits* where credit is due.

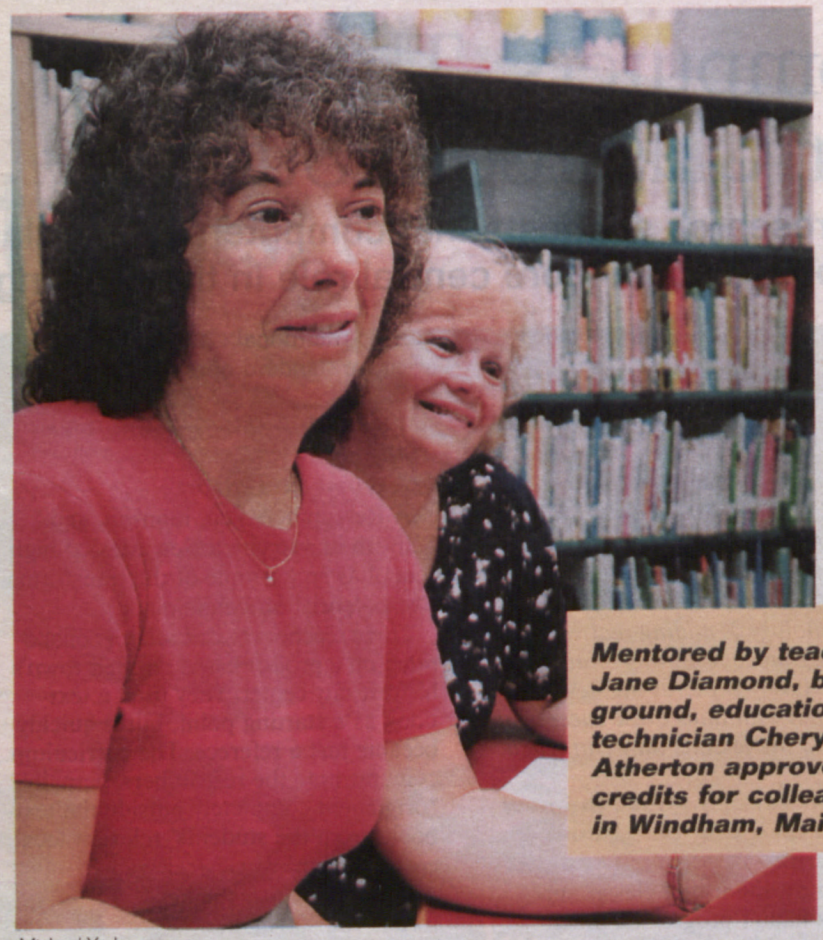
First, a little background: In Maine, individual ed techs must meet specific educational requirements to be "authorized" by the state Department of Education. To maintain their authorization, techs must take the equivalent of three credit hours of educationally related coursework every five years.

Unfortunately, however, "It's difficult for ed techs to get the education credits they need," laments Lynda Locke, a kindergarten ed tech at Windham Primary School.

It's been 12 years, Locke points out, since any Windham support staff have been paid for workshop days—and most of the workshops offered haven't been relevant to ed techs.

So when Locke learned last winter that, thanks to years of hard work by the Maine Education Association, the state board of education had adopted rules that let districts set up their own "local support systems" for ed techs, she jumped at the opportunity.

Locke spearheaded a group of about a dozen ed tech members from the Windham Education Association.



Mentored by teacher Jane Diamond, background, educational technician Cheryl Atherton approves credits for colleagues in Windham, Maine.

Michael York

Working with teacher leaders, the group drafted a plan to establish a local credit system for Windham's 60 ed techs, within the existing local teacher certification support system.

The new ed tech support team is now gathering information about the jobs and educational experiences of the district's paraeducators, with mentoring help from teacher Jane Diamond, who is the head of the teachers' certification support system.

Already in place is a local support system that gives Windham ed techs credit for new, job-related learning from nontraditional sources.

"A group of us took sign language workshops to help us work with a deaf student," Lynda Locke recalls. "With a local support system in place, we'll be able to get educational credit for this. Before, it wasn't counted."

Cheryl Atherton is the team's "primary sign-off person" for approving ed tech credits. Next on the agenda, she notes, will be the planning of in-service that really meets ed tech needs. ✔

Behind the Scenes

Since the early 1990's, Maine law has classified all paraeducator positions into one of three categories—Ed Tech I, II, or III—depending on duties and responsibilities. A paraeducator who fills a position must be "authorized" (analogous to a teacher being certified) at or above the level of that position.

Authorization is based on educational experience. The Ed Tech laws and regulations also prescribe requirements for in-service training and continuing education.

For more information about the Maine Ed Tech system, contact Maine Education Association primary ESP staff contact Joan Morin, or IPD Director Nini McManamy, both at 35 Community Drive, Augusta, ME 04333, 207/622-5866.

Going the Extra Mile

Sherri Postma's background as a surgical assistant serves her well when she works one-on-one with medically fragile children in the Missoula, Montana, schools.

Postma, now a paraeducator, uses her medical expertise for simple solutions, like calming a child with high blood pressure.

Postma also knows how to move beyond the medical to the psychological, helping special needs kids surmount the stigma they often face.

To foster understanding and respect, Postma shares information about these children, their concerns, their disabilities, and their abilities with both regular ed students and the community.

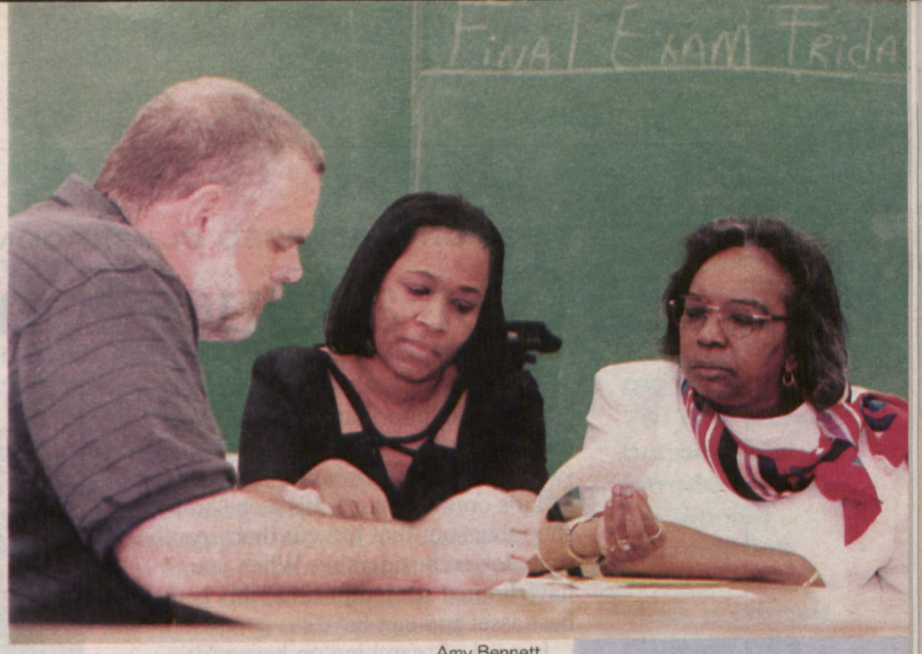
Postma's initiative has also fostered better awareness of another misunderstood group of folks: educational support personnel. As co-president of Missoula's merged NEA-AFT local affiliate, Postma's excellent rapport with the school board and administrators has earned considerable respect for ESP.

Empowering others is what teacher's aide **Doris Cambell** does best. A winner of the Texas State Teachers Association's Ronnie Ray Educational Support Personnel of the Year Award, Cambell enjoys helping her colleagues. She informs educators, especially new ones, of their rights and points them in the right direction.

Cambell works in a program for preschool children with disabilities at Martin Elementary in Beaumont. The program is built on "kids being responsible for themselves," she stresses. "Some have a language deficit; we give them words. It makes you feel real good when they leave here able to make a 10-word sentence."

TEAM PLAYER

Nothing Left Undone



Amy Bennett

Louisiana high school secretary Saundra Roberson, center, is literally in the center of things—from organizing student activities to assisting staff with technology.

Name: Saundra Roberson
Job title: Secretary to the principal at Booker T. Washington High School, Shreveport, Louisiana
NEA local affiliate: Caddo Association of Educators
Experience: Six years as secretary
What I do: Beyond assisting the administrative staff, I handle many of BTW's day-to-day operations. I produce programs and brochures for all school functions and various departments, fulfill material and supply requests from teachers, train students and staff on software programs, and help coordinate both typesetting and reproduction of school publications and organization of homecoming and football activities.
My credentials: I was a computer lab manager at BTW and received computer training and certification from the Computer Curriculum Corporation and Urban Technology, Inc.
How I help students achieve: It's crucial to be visible among the student body. I attend all games (including out-of town playoffs), concerts, and other extracurricular activities. I volunteer in the concession stands when needed. I also have served as co-sponsor of the Black History Program, two pageants, and the 1998-99 junior class.

Not all students have access to a home computer. When they need assistance with research papers and reports, some students come to my house for instruction on how to use the computer for research and word processing. I also instruct students on how to use GED and ACT computer test preparation programs.

With the students' guidance, I help edit and print the school newspaper. The students can bring diskettes to me for grammar and format suggestions.

How I team up with my colleagues: Faculty and support staff need technology support as much as teachers do. At a workshop, I taught the clerical staff how to use Microsoft Word more effectively and efficiently.

New teachers need extra support all around. I have created a booklet called "Know Your School" for the new staff, and I show them around the building during the new teacher orientation.

It helps to have a friend, so I always tell the new teachers to come ask me questions if they need anything!

To contact Saundra Roberson, send E-mail to sdroberson@juno.com. ✔

RESOURCES

Bus Drivers in Cyberspace

If you haven't visited NEA member Frank Hyden's School Bus Driver Web site recently, it's worth a return trip. The site now links to the Web pages of some 25 other school bus drivers around the country. The address: http://user..mc.net/hyden.

Pathways to Teaching

If you're an ESP member considering becoming a teacher, you should look into Careers in Teaching, a program of Recruiting New Teachers, Inc. Call the RNT Careers in Teaching Helpline at 617/489-6407, E-mail them at uhl@rnt.org, or visit for the information you need on making the transition to a certified position, including education and financial aid programs.

Guidance for ESP Professional Development

If you're setting up in-service or other professional development programs for ESP, a new NEA publication can help. *Professional Development for Educational Support Personnel: A Resource Manual of Elements of Current and Future Training for Professional Growth and Success* contains key program elements, examples from the field, and resources for each of the nine ESP job groups.

For a single free copy of this publication, write to ESP Program, NEA Affiliate Capacity Building, 1201 16th St. NW, Washington, DC 20036, or phone 202/822-7131. You can also read the manual on the Web at http://www.nea.org/esp/resource/profdevl.htm.

Keep Up With Information Technology News

Newsscan Daily is a short, lively, and thought-provoking E-mail newsletter that provides an easy way to keep up with significant developments in the field of information technology. In addition to news items, regular features include "Honorary Subscriber" and "Worth Thinking About." For more information and a free subscription, visit http://www.newsscan.org.

Useful Tips for Playground Safety

Playground recess should be a time to have fun. Yet each year more than 200,000 children are injured on playgrounds.

The leading cause of playground injuries? Improper surfaces. Hard surfaces such as asphalt, blacktop, concrete, grass, packed dirt, and rocks are not acceptable, according to the National Program for Playground Safety (NPPS). They should be replaced with cushioning materials, like hardwood fiber/mulch, pea gravel, or rubber.

NPPS provides safety information and resources for parents; for people designing, building, and maintaining playgrounds; and for those who supervise children on playgrounds.

Contact the National Program for Playground Safety, University of Northern Iowa, School for Health, Physical Education and Leisure Services, Cedar Falls, Iowa 50614-0618. Phone: 1-800-554-PLAY, fax: 319/273-7308, E-mail: playground-safety@uni.edu, Web site: http://www.uni.edu/playground/. ✔

Driving a school bus is a mission for **Shirley Howard** of Midland, Texas. Her passengers' photos are pasted above her windshield, and Howard says she likes to treat those kids "just like they're mine."

Howard, another winner of TSTA's ESP of the Year Award, checks that students on her bus have completed their homework and are dressed well. When homework isn't done, Howard either calls the offenders' parents or offers to tutor them in her spare time.

"Some people take kids for granted," Howard laments. "I tell them every day, 'I love you and you can make it, you can do it.'"

Morris County (New Jersey) School Nurses Association activist **Grace Lee** is an advocate for certified school nurses. Not long ago, Lee helped prevent Dover Public Schools from privatizing school nursing services by educating legislators and the general public through a writing campaign.

A certified school nurse for the past 12 years, Lee keeps students and colleagues healthy at Frelinghuysen Middle School. She has organized a health careers club, a loss and grieving group, health and safety fairs, a faculty weight-loss group, after-school fitness walks, and a cooperative program for physically challenged students.

She believes every child needs—and is entitled to—primary health care in order to reach his or her optimal learning potential.

*Know an ESP member who deserves recognition in **NEA Today**? Send all the details, including the person's job title and school district, to ESPInput@list.nea.org.*

Learning

TIPS FOR THE WIRED CLASSROOM

Got a Question? Ask Jeeves

My students are having great luck finding information on the Web using the Ask Jeeves search engine (www.ask.com and www.ajkids.com for a "kids-only" version). It's a one-stop-shopping spot that has cut their search time down considerably. When you have limited computer time, this is the best asset you can have.

Instead of searching on keywords, you ask questions directly, such as "Who invented zippers?" This site is particularly useful when students have homework questions but don't know how to be specific in their searches.

I think one of my colleagues is hooked on Jeeves. This site proved invaluable when her class came to the computer lab to research careers. Ask Jeeves has even made my own children less dependent on my help.

Jeri Lynn Taylor
Computer resource teacher
San Jose, California

Ask Jeeves for Kids!
Please type a question and click "Ask!"
For example: "Why is the sky blue?"
Ask!
Check my spelling
How do I make cool paper airplanes?
Ask!
About · Help
Advice!
Teachers
Students
Today's Word
PC MAGAZINE EDITORS' CHOICE
SOLAR ECLIPSE TOUR
What kids are asking right now!
Where can teachers find lesson plans or curriculum ideas on the topic of vocabulary?
Peek!
E_Postcards
Pick a fun card to send!
SUMMER TOURS
Baseball
Games
Weather
ACE Computer Camp
Order now & get FREE Shipping at The Disney Store Online
*Note to Parents: Tell us what you think about the site.

My favorite Web site

"TeacherReports (www.TeacherReports.com) features an online, self-calculating gradebook. Teachers can post assignments and grades for students and their parents to access."

Jennifer Harrison
German and computer teacher
Roy, MT

Famous Women Mathematicians

During Women's History Month in March, I have my Algebra II classes do a unit on famous female mathematicians. They conduct research using Web sites like the one from Agnes Scott College (www.agnesscott.edu/lriddle/women/women.htm).

My students' task is to make a presentation to the class on the selected female mathematician's life, struggles, and desire to study math.

Students' grades are based on the information and the creative manner of their presentations. Students have written poems, performed puppet shows, set up interviews, and created PowerPoint presentations.

Merrily La Scala
High school math teacher
Cedar Grove, New Jersey

Scheduling Computer Time

I post a computer schedule in my classroom that lists the students' names next to their individual computer times. I allow only two students at a time to work on computer assignments, and each child gets three or four chances a week to use the computers.

The children know that whatever classwork they miss during their computer time must be made up quickly. My first graders have learned to read the times, check the clock, and sign on and off. Having a schedule posted helps students learn about responsibility and self-management.

Tammara Payne-Moore
First grade teacher
Lake Geneva, Wisconsin

Collecting and Graphing Data

I designed a fun lesson to teach students how to create spreadsheets and graphs, as well as how to collect, record, and analyze data using technology.

Every day, students go to the Internet to find temperatures in Spokane and their choice of four other cities around the world. I set up my Internet homepage to show daily temperatures for 10 cities so that students don't have to go surfing for the information.

Students record the data on spreadsheets they created and then exhibit the information in both raw and graphed forms.

After collecting three to four weeks of data, the students modify their graphs (colors, fonts, sizes, lines, etc.), exploring which graph most effectively displays their data.

At the end of the assignment, students turn in their spreadsheets and graphs along with a one-page paper on using spreadsheets, comparing and contrasting temperatures, and predicting weather trends.

Students set up the spreadsheets from scratch—not from templates. We created one together in class before they tried their own.

Lori Hays
Fifth grade teacher
Spokane, Washington

Tech Tools

- **The Online Classroom Flyer is a free daily newsletter available from the Learning Company at www.learningcompanyschool.com/school/resource/flyer.asp. The newsletter features lots of links to current events and online resources.**
- **You'll find a large collection of math lessons for high school students at http://forum.swarthmore.edu/teachers/high/lessons-individual.html. You can browse the lessons or search the database.**
- **Fine art comes to the Net with Artcyclopedia. This site, at www.artcyclopedia.com, has a searchable database of the work of more than 5,000 artists.**
- **Want to keep on top of grants, contests, and funding opportunities for educators and students? You'll get the scoop at www.techlearning.com/grants.html.**

Too Few Books? Try PowerPoint

I teach in a new school with few materials for my students, and I've found PowerPoint to be a godsend. I make overhead presentations with sounds, clip-art, and great backgrounds. The students are more apt to pay attention when they hear Bart Simpson say "Ay Caramba" followed up with a new line of information.

Then, I give students copies of the PowerPoint slides. Since I don't have enough books for each student in my three classes to have a book to take home, this is almost as good.

Ed Wieger
Resource room teacher
Las Vegas, Nevada

TALK TO US:

Have a nifty classroom tip or lesson plan that uses technology? E-mail a description (under 200 words, please!) to wiredclassroom@list.nea.org.

Is there a Web site, CD-ROM, or piece of software you can't live without? E-mail your favorites—and why you love them—to myfavoritetech@list.nea.org.

Or send your responses by regular mail to NEA Today, or by Fax to 202/822-7206, or through the Web at www.nea.org/cet.

Those published here will receive a sparkling NEA Today mug!

Animated About Learning

Vermont students are creating professional-quality computer animation—and sharing their expertise with their community.

Who:
Tim Comolli, Imaging Lab director and English teacher, South Burlington High School, South Burlington, Vermont

E-mail:
comollitd@aol.com

Inspiration:
One art form led to another for 35-year educator Tim Comolli. Five years ago, he needed to create credit lines for a video his English students were producing. So Comolli started tinkering with his broadcasting background and a new 3-D production tool. His students did more than tinker.

"The kids were terribly excited," says Comolli about his students' enthusiasm for the images they soon were creating. They became so involved with the software that school board members started wondering why students wanted to enter a school building on the weekends.

All this student enthusiasm sparked Comolli's interest in creating wider computing opportunities for students. The eventual result: an Imaging Lab for South Burlington High, a state-of-the-art facility totally funded by the sale of student-produced animations, gifts, and grants.

The Imaging Lab enjoys support from NEA's foundation, the National Foundation for the Improvement of Education. Local businesses and national software companies have also donated computers and high-end graphics programs.

Lesson:
How did South Burlington High, in a town of just 13,000, come to house one of the premier computer graphics labs on the Eastern Seaboard? In large part, credit's due to the way Comolli runs the lab: with the aim of empowering students by using them as the instructors.

"I'm a teacher of Shakespeare, not of computers," notes Comolli.

It's tough, he adds, to keep up with fast-changing technology. So why not rely on teenagers—who are totally immersed in wired culture anyway—for expertise?

The Imaging Lab has become a popular community resource. Working with the town's recreation department, students lead evening classes at the lab that draw in many parents and their children.

The students teaching all these courses include kids as young as sixth graders from the nearby middle school.

The Imaging Lab is also working to hook younger students on learning. The lab has teamed up with the local police department in offering middle school students an after-school program, as well as a Friday evening program, entitled the "Twilight Zone," the aim of which is to keep kids off the streets—and drugs.

To supplement this anti-drug program, Comolli has his juniors and seniors create 30-second substance abuse commercials. Some of their work has been broadcast on local TV stations.

Nothing succeeds like success. Students active in the Imaging Lab have earned internships with local graphics companies and conference appearances at MIT and Princeton.

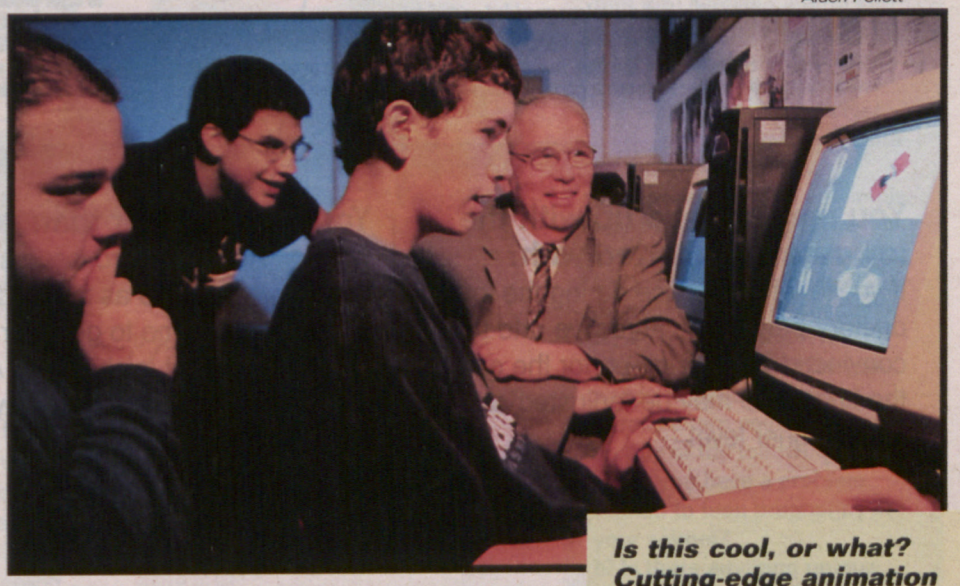
With proficiency in the same software used in the new *Star Wars* movie, Comolli's students have become a hot commodity in the computer animation job market.

Click:
"The students are pushing the envelope of what can be done with video production," Comolli says. "This work is usually done by professional studios." ✔

—Aliya Sternstein

Want to see samples of student work? Check out the Imaging Lab Web site at http://imagelab.sburl.k12.vt.us.

Alden Pellett



Is this cool, or what? Cutting-edge animation software is one reason why Vermont teacher Tim Comolli's electronic arts class has a two-year waiting list.

My favorite Software

"Multimedia Workshop from Davidson & Associates (800/545-7677) is simple but powerful introductory multimedia presentation software. My class produced projects with narration, sound, music, and movies."

Robert Hernandez
Elementary bilingual teacher
Dallas, TX

Bytes for Beginners

When I'm surfing the Net, I often get a message that says, "Plug-in required to view this page," and asks me if I want to download the plug-in. What, exactly, is a plug-in?

What your Web browser is trying to tell you is that it needs a special software program—a plug-in—to perform a specific function before it can show you the contents of the Web page you're trying to see.

Software engineers who developed Internet browsers like Netscape Navigator and Microsoft's Internet Explorer realized that it would be unwise to attempt to create a single software program capable of performing every function required of surfing the Internet—playing all different formats of video, sound, and animation, for example.

Even if they could perform such a feat, Web browsers would be major memory hogs and obese with features that you might never use.

Perhaps the most clever analogy used to describe browsers and plug-ins compares them to a vacuum cleaner: "Along with the basic machine, you can get a variety of attachments—an extended and slender wand for hard-to-reach cracks, a toothy thing for drapes, a furry nozzle for those special furry-nozzle jobs."

A browser's attachments are called plug-ins. Created by third-party software developers, these small, single-minded applications each have a specific function, so you need only download the plug-in that performs the function that interests you—say, one that plays a sound or a movie.

Then, when you try to access a Web page that requires the plug-in, the necessary plug-in launches automatically.

Most browsers now come pre-packaged with the most popular plug-ins, but you can download additional ones as you go along surfing the Net.

Have ideas, comments, or questions about technology? You can E-mail webeditor@dear.nea.org or fax Dear Webeditor at 202/822-7206. Check out www.nea.org/cet for more questions from beginners and answers from the experts.

NEA Consumer Alert

More credit card issuers adopt alarming new practices, making it imperative to read the fine print.

Terms & Conditions

Annual Percentage Rate	Grace Period for Repayment of Balances for Purchases	Annual Fee	Minimum Finance Charge	Transaction Fees	Method of Computing the Balance for Purchases
With a balance transfer, an introductory 2.9% APR on purchases and balance transfers until the first day of the billing cycle that includes 11/01/99; after that, a 12.99% APR on purchases and balance transfers; without a balance transfer, a 12.99% APR for purchases and balance transfers; the APR for cash advances is 19.99%.*	20 to 25 days from the date of the periodic statement (provided you paid your previous balance in full by the due date).	None	$.50 in any month that a finance charge is payable.	Purchase of wire transfers, money orders, betting or casino chips or similar items; purchase of foreign currency and travelers checks from other than a bank; and use of Convenience Checks: 3% of the amount of each purchase or check, but not less than $5. Balance Transfers: 3% of the amount of each balance transfer, but not less than $5 nor more than $35.	Two-Cycle Average Daily Balance Method (including new purchases).
* If payment is received late once during the introductory period, the APR will adjust to 12.99% on purchases and balance transfers. If payment is received late twice in any six-month period, an adjusted APR of 19.99% takes effect on purchases and balance transfers. If you do not make payments for two consecutive months, the APR for all balances on your account goes to 22.99%.					

Transaction Fee for ATM cash advances: 3% of the amount of the advance, but not less than $10. Transaction Fee for all other cash advances: 3% of the amount of the advance, but not less than $15. Late Payment Fee: $29. Over-the-Credit-Limit Fee: $29. Returned Check Fee: $29.

The grace period does not apply to cash advances.

[redacted] services are available only to [redacted] cardmembers. [redacted] reserves the right to change the benefit features associated with your card at any time.

Omission of any information requested on this Certificate may be reason for denial of an account. This Certificate cannot be processed if the mailing address has been changed to a foreign address.

Return your offer in the envelope provided or mail to:

[redacted]

You agree that we have the right to obtain a current credit report in connection with [redacted] review of your application and, with respect to [redacted] subsequently in connection with a requested charge to your account, the renewal of your account, or a change in your credit line; and that [redacted] has the right to report to others its credit experience with you. Upon your request, we will tell you the name and address of each consumer reporting agency from which we obtained a consumer report about you. [redacted] will review your credit history and income to determine if you qualify for a Visa card and, if so, your credit line. In certain instances, based on this review, you may receive a Classic card with a credit line of less than $5,000. The minimum gross annual income required for a Visa card is $14,400.

Affiliate Information Sharing: [redacted] is part of [redacted] Corporation. [redacted] and our [redacted] affiliates may share information about you among affiliates in order to offer products and services of interest to you. If you would rather we not share information from your application, credit bureaus or third parties, please write to us at [redacted] Bank, N.A., [redacted] Please make sure to include with your request your entire name, full address, and social security number.

You may not end up with the low rate you started with.

If you're late just once during the introductory period, the attractive rate that convinced you to sign up for the card in the first place may be "adjusted" to a much higher level.

You may be later than you think.

As credit card issuers shrink the grace period to as few as 20 days, you have less time to get your payment in before interest is charged. And your chances of being late on a payment increase.

It's shocking how high late penalties can be.

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Other practices to watch out for include steep interest rates and fees on cash advances and "two-cycle billing," which means interest can be charged retroactively to the purchase date. And because some credit card issuers may not notify you of a change in rate, be sure to check your statement for the rate you're currently paying.

At NEA Member Benefits, it is part of our mission to keep NEA members and their families informed of consumer issues that may affect them, such as the credit card practices described here. **We want to assure our members that they are not affected by practices such as these when using the NEA Credit Card or any other products or services provided by NEA Member Benefits.**

And remember: It's always in your best interest to read the fine print carefully.

For more information and a free copy of our independent Consumer Guide on Credit Cards, call 1-800-637-4636 today.

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FSNT 1099

Cold and Flu Season Coming Achoo

The aches and pains—and missed school days—of the cold and flu season are almost here. Paul Sathrum of NEA's Health Information Network spoke recently with Dr. Michael Ponder, a family physician in Virginia, to find out how to help students stay healthy and what to do when they show up sick.

What can school staff do to help prevent flu epidemics?

Certainly, when we think of the spread of colds and flu, the number one way epidemics spread is through the air. Unfortunately, we don't have a whole lot of control over the air in schools.

One of the primary things school personnel should look at is their school's air filtering mechanism. These mechanisms need to be clean—and kept clean—so that when viruses are filtered, there's room for them to be absorbed and taken out of general circulation.

What about children who are sent to school sick?

My wife was a teacher, and she has a wonderful story about a little boy bringing in a note from his parents saying, "Little Johnny threw up this morning but was feeling better, so I sent him to school."

As Johnny brought the note to my wife, he threw up on her desk.

This is another way of saying that parents have to be more aggressive about keeping their children at home—especially any child that has a fever, cold, or congestion.

A child who has nausea and has vomited at home during the night should certainly not go to school the next day.

Every school system is, of course, different, but we are seeing in many areas of the country the hiring of more school nurses, especially for the younger grades. Many nurses have become very aggressive about documenting children's health early, helping teachers do quick assessments when a child first comes to school in the morning, and getting sick children out of circulation and home as quickly as possible.

What should school staff look for in a quick assessment of a child's health?

There are several things to look for. Does the child feel warm? The hand is not a great thermometer, but it certainly gives an idea if a child is running a temperature.

Educators often say that they can look at a child's eyes and see if the child is not feeling well. The tell-tale signs: Red eyes or dark circles around the eyes, an indication the child did not sleep well the night before.

Also look for any drainage from the eyes—yellow or green drainage is especially bad. These children need to be out of school for at least 24 hours and taken to their doctor.

If children say they're not feeling well and their hands are extremely cool, that's also a potential sign of trouble. Sometimes, children's bodies try to get rid of the heat when they have a fever, and, in the process, hands can become cool.

The child who is normally a great eater who suddenly doesn't want to eat should be evaluated. Until a teacher or school staffer knows every child well, any children who say their tummy or their head hurts deserves a look over. Any complaint should be taken seriously.

What school-based policies would you recommend for dealing with colds and flu?

In most schools, the child is evaluated and the parents are called to pick up the child.

If the school or school nurse—let's hope most schools are going to have nurses—feels that a child should be taken out of school because of illness, there should be a protocol in place, under which the parents or caregiver will be called to come and get the child.

If your school does not have a protocol already in place for dealing with children who become ill during school hours, I would strongly recommend that one be developed.

Is the flu shot recommended for children?

The flu shot is not recommended for all children at this time, though shots are often recommended for children who have compromised immune systems, chronic lung problems, or other immune system problems.

HEALTH RESOURCES

- The *Better Homes and Gardens* Web site offers an interactive guide to help determine whether you have a cold, the flu, or allergies. The site suggests treatments for your symptoms and provides additional information about viruses. Visit the Web at www.bhglive.com/health.
- At www.mayohealth.org, you can find a wealth of information on the symptoms of and treatments for cold and the flu. The site features articles on the latest virus strains and the medications to fight them. The site also allows you to ask physicians specific questions about your illness.
- For further information about influenza in the coming flu season, see *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* Recommendations and Reports, April 30, 1999, vol. 48, no. RR-4, "Prevention and Control of Influenza." $2.25 from the U.S. Government Printing Office, 202/512-1800.

NEA HIN

From the **NEA Health Information Network**

■ New Publication

The NEA Health Information Network is pleased to announce a new quarterly newsletter, *Pointer's Dish*. Named after the lovable dog of the "Can We Talk" family, *Pointer's Dish* will offer readers news and information on HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases, teen pregnancy, parent-child communications, and family-school-community partnerships. The timely information in *Pointer's Dish* will help school employees develop programs that promote healthy lifestyles, student achievement, and broad-based partnerships. To be added to the mailing list of this free publication, contact NEA HIN at 800/718-8387.

■ Teen Pregnancy

The NEA Health Information Network was recently awarded a five-year cooperative agreement with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to look at school-based teen pregnancy prevention policies and programs. The Health Information Network is now developing materials that help school employees develop and implement teen pregnancy prevention policies and practices in the school setting. To adequately address the needs of NEA members, the NEA Health Information Network needs to hear from you. Please share your feedback on any of the following:
a) Do you have a problem related to teen pregnancy in your school?
b) Is there anything unique about the problem?
c) Do you know of any resources, policies, or programs that appear successful in combatting teen pregnancy?
d) What can NEA develop or do to assist you?

Please send your comments by E-mail to Vicki Harrison at vharrison@nea.org.

■ Cancer Education Award

The 1999 Vivian Roy Bowser Cancer Education Award will grant $500 to an outstanding individual working to educate others about cancer. To find out more, contact 800/718-8387 or visit the Web at www.nea.org/hin.

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**All other APYs shown in the comparison chart are valid as of 8/4/99, based on a $2,500 minimum opening deposit and a term of 18 months. Source – *BISYS Research Services*, 8/4/99.

†Eligible NEA family members include parents, spouse, domestic partner and children.

The NEA Deposit Program has been developed for NEA members and their families only. If a member decides not to renew his/her membership, that person and their family will no longer be eligible to receive the preferred rates through the NEA Deposit Program. If eligible, a replacement account will be offered.

Absolutely no membership dues are used to market this program.

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When It Comes to Money, Kids Need to Know the Score

Q: How and when should I introduce my kids to the subject of money?

A: Child psychologists and early childhood development specialists suggest that you begin talking to your children about how money works when they are about three years old. When you take a trip to the market, the bank, or the gas station, explain how things are bought and sold and how you make choices. When your children get a little older, give them a dollar and offer three choices of what they can buy with it.

The most controversial, and most misused, aspect of money education, experts say, is the allowance. An allowance should be introduced at about age six. The amount isn't as important as how an allowance is handled.

An allowance should be paid, without fail, at the same time every week. It should not be tied to any household chores, to grades, or to behavior. It should never be taken away as punishment. Tying money to behavior teaches children that money can be used to manipulate.

Instead, children should be assigned specific chores around the house simply because they are a part of a family. They should also be given the opportunity to earn extra money by doing special things like washing windows, weeding the garden, or waxing the car.

Your goal should be to increase your children's responsibility for earning money and deciding how to spend it as they grow older. You might help your children open a savings account, then later a checking account.

You might also want to involve your children in family budget discussions and let them help decide how to save and invest for college.

Q: How much life insurance do I need?

A: None if you're single, have no dependents, and no one counts on you for support. Otherwise, you may want to purchase some insurance to provide extra protection for your parents or other family members. If you're the solo breadwinner for a young family, you need a lot. That amount should decrease as you get older, accumulate other assets, and put away money for your children's college education.

There are some rules of thumb for life insurance coverage, but most of them miss the mark. For example, some analysts say you should have life insurance worth five to nine times your salary. That's a bit too general.

A good financial planner would have you go through a worksheet to see how much your family would need to live on, without your income, and aim to replace that with the earnings on the life insurance proceeds. Ideally, beneficiaries should be able to invest the proceeds from the policy and live on the earnings.

But don't be discouraged if you can't afford as much as you seem to need. Term insurance, which is straight insurance protection with no savings or investment element, is the best choice for most consumers.

Q: Should I put money in my child's name to save for college?

A: Most states provide for a trust to be set up in your child's name under a Uniform Gift to Minors Act. You are allowed to give up to $10,000 per year to an individual without incurring gift taxes, and that money can be placed in the trust for your child.

When you put money into your child's trust account, the money belongs to the child and the child can use it for any purpose at your state's age of majority. Some counselors advise against these trusts for this reason, arguing that some children are not mature enough at age 18 to make sound financial decisions.

The money in such a trust is taxed at the parent's highest marginal tax rate until the child turns 14. After that, the child's lower tax rate kicks in, which means that little income tax will be paid on the account.

A more ticklish issue is how the trust affects college financial aid. Financial aid formulas are complex. Only a portion of a parent's assets are considered to be available for college because parents have other expenses—saving for retirement, raising other children.

But the money in a child's trust is considered to be available for college tuition. So the more money you have in trust, the lower your chances of getting financial aid.

If you are counting on financial aid, consider opening an account in your own name and earmarking it for college.That way, the money would not be counted against you.

But creating a trust account does have its advantages. Having money in your child's name, for instance, can help teach the child about saving and investing. ✔

—Mary Rowland

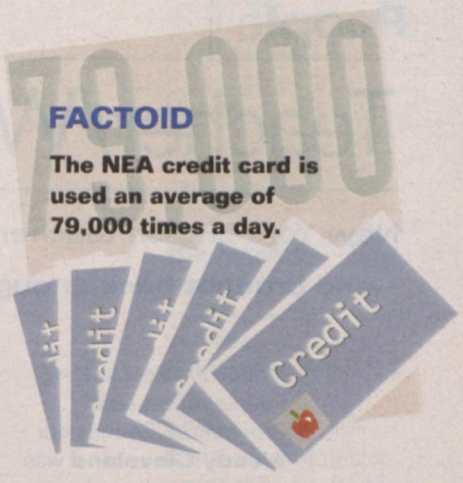
Rowland is an author and regular contributor to major financial planning magazines.

Thrifty Educator

Each month, NEA members offer their best tips for saving money at school. This month's tips come from Laura Chandler, a fifth grade teacher at E.E. Miller Elementary School in North Carolina, and Verlee Owens, a special education and English teacher at West High School in Sioux City, Iowa.

Laura Chandler: I have discovered lots of uses for the ordinary baby wipe! I ask parents to send in a box of wipes during the first week of school, and I store the collection. Baby wipes are wonderful for cleaning overhead projectors, classroom charts, desks, and other items. Best of all, the boxes make wonderful storage containers for science materials, math manipulatives, and game pieces. I use a marker to label each box with the contents so I can tell what's what.

Verlee Owens: Looking for some wonderful and usually free teaching resources to start the school year? Frustrated because materials haven't arrived, but you know the kids will? Try your local chamber of commerce or state tourism office. Many of these organizations offer books, maps, and brochures in classroom sets just for the asking. Teachers across the curriculum and grade levels can encourage creative writing, improve map skills, and work on scanning for information and following directions. Students get really excited about the treasures in their own city and state.



FACTOID

The NEA credit card is used an average of 79,000 times a day.

Heads Up from NEA Member Benefits

Ending December 31, 1999, NEA members with new or refinanced mortgage loans from the NEA Home Financing Program® will get a "Driveaway Getaway" vacation package, compliments of Norwest Mortgage. This four-day/three-night vacation package is good for accommodations for two adults and three children at a deluxe hotel or resort. Members can choose from over 100 locations across the United States and Canada. Other amenities in the package include a $25 airline certificate, a seven-day roadside assistance membership, and a 60-minute prepaid phone card. See page 45 for more complete terms and conditions. Or call 800-NEA-4-YOU from 8 a.m. to midnight, Monday-Friday, ET.

Most homeowners are aware of the need to protect their homes against theft or calamity. But many renters, mobile homeowners, and condominium owners neglect their need for coverage. The NEA Homeowners® Insurance Plan provides individually tailored plans to NEA members, whether they rent or own. And new member-only benefits will soon be available to tenant policyholders. Some of the enhancements include increases in coverage for electronic equipment, personal records, and business property. The policy will also reimburse up to $100 per month (maximum three months) toward rent payment, should the policyholder's unit become uninhabitable. And the deductible reduces or disappears after four loss-free years. After approval from state insurance departments, all new policies will automatically include the new tenant enhancements. For more info, call Horace Mann at 800-999-1030, Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. to 9 p.m., (Saturdays, 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.) ET.

Teacher/Writer Breaks Down Barriers

New York English teacher Wendy Cleveland went to South Africa —and brought back enough memories to last a lifetime.

Through the People-to-People Ambassador Programs, NEA member **Wendy Cleveland** was recently part of a delegation of American women writers and educators that met South African writers, publishers, educators, and editors on their home turf.

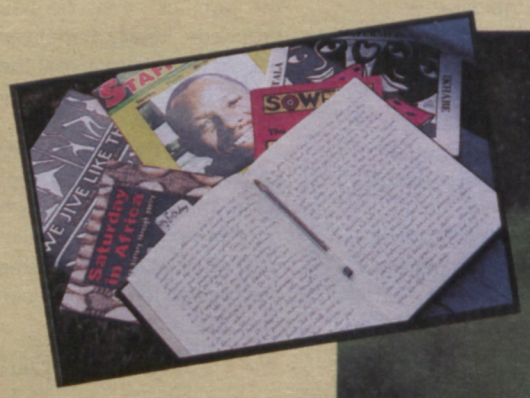
Over a two-week period, the American delegation criss-crossed the nation.

"We met with the Congress of South African Writers, exchanged ideas and approaches to writing, and gave three readings during our trip," reports Cleveland, a 10th and 12th grade English teacher at Lansing (New York) Central High School.

"It was fascinating to see the difference in approach," she adds. "U.S. readers were so professorial, while the South Africans were wonderfully spontaneous."

One special highlight of the trip: a memorable day spent at a prison reading with young men in a writing and art rehabilitation program.

Cleveland brought home an extensive photo record of her trip, a meticulous journal, and vivid memories of the South African people and panorama. These have provided her inspiration and images for several new poems, including one, at right, about life in Soweto, a place of searing poverty and a turbulent past. ✔



Freedom Square

At the outdoor market in Soweto
I watch you point to a chicken
boxed in a wire crate. For a few rand
the vendor sells you a week of dinners,
its feet tethered and wings clipped.
You grab it firmly with one hand
and in the other you clutch the fingers
of a little boy wearing his cap
backwards.
Satchel balanced on your turbaned
head,
you turn toward the city of tin shacks
and squatters and rutted roads,
that chicken dangling upside down,
that little boy clicking Xhosa,
this white woman feeling the weight
of a hundred rand calling you back.

This poem was originally published in *The Ithaca Times*.

Tim McKinney

DSEA

A Parapro of Distinction

Julie Coleman has quietly earned herself the title of Delaware's 1999 Educational Support Staff Person of the Year. This classroom paraeducator in W.B. Simpson Elementary School's Intensive Learning Center was overwhelmed by the sudden honor.

"I'm usually behind the scenes," she explains.

Coleman, a Delaware State Education Association activist, may consider herself the shy type, but she's anything but when pushing for equal rights for paras in the Caesar Rodney school district.

"The students don't see us as any different," says Coleman of her second and third graders, all referrals to Simpson's Intensive Learning Center from other Kent County districts.

Coleman and a teacher colleague work with their small class in a wing of the elementary school in Camden, Delaware. Coleman has the responsibility for preparing the notes that children take home to their parents to keep them informed of how their children are behaving.

"These are children who need that extra attention and care," she notes, adding that once they are mainstreamed again, they're usually able to refrain from distracting the teacher and fighting.

For six years—ever since she watched Caesar Rodney teachers vote to include paras in the local Association—Coleman has served as an Association rep. Coleman is a nine-year veteran in her district, and her first 6th graders have graduated from high school. They now like to return to thank Coleman for giving them the redirection they needed. ✔

David Zalubowski

Wheelchairs Are Tools

"Wheelchairs are like glasses," says **Katie Kirkham**. "They are tools, not limitations." Kirkham, a school counselor in Ft. Collins, was recently named Ms. Wheelchair Colorado. She has multiple sclerosis and has used a wheelchair full-time since 1992. Love for her job inspired Kirkham to continue teaching with a new goal: to demystify wheelchairs.

"It's important for children to realize that people with disabilities can still achieve their goals," she says. "Being in a wheelchair is not a reason to stop."

As Ms. Wheelchair Colorado, Kirkham will travel the state talking to children and adults to help expand opportunities for individuals in wheelchairs. In August, she competed for the title of Ms. Wheelchair USA.

For more information on the Ms. Wheelchair America program, call 303/232-4063. To schedule an appearance by Katie Kirkham, call 970/226-3221. ✔

Preserving the Past

When NEA member **Jim Short** learned that Olive Hill Elementary—housed in the building where he had attended high school and later taught industrial arts—was about to be demolished, he knew that he had to act quickly.

Short, who retired this year after 27 years of teaching, decided to lay down $20,000 of his own money and buy the 70-year-old school in Olive Hill, Kentucky, to keep it from being demolished.

"The architecture was so beautiful I just couldn't stand to see it ruined," says Short, who was mayor of the 2,000-citizen town when he bought the school in late 1997. "People in the community look at it as the heart and soul of our community. There are so many memories, so much nostalgia, connected with it."

Three months after Short bought the school, he sold it at cost to the Olive Hill Historical Society, made up mostly of retired teachers. The Historical Society is currently renovating the building, known for its 104 steps.

The school will become a community museum that will feature restored classrooms and exhibits of Olive Hill's past. The gym will be used for "old-timers" games, Short says.

Where did Short get the $20,000? Half came from a home equity loan and half from his NEA credit card. "That's what made it so beautiful," Short says. "It was the NEA credit card that saved the school. I couldn't have come up with the money quickly enough otherwise." ✔

J. Breck Smithers

It's Okay to Act Out

Think it's possible to have high school students and third graders learning together? **Michelle Monger** knows it is.

In the drama program she started seven years ago at Spotswood High School in Pennlaird, Virginia, Monger has seen students of all ages and backgrounds join together successfully in the spirit of the performing arts.

"It really breaks down all barriers," Monger says. "The students all have to learn to work together to produce the final result."

High school students in Monger's performing arts class reach out to local elementary school classes and conduct drama workshops. The 90-minute workshops feature theater "games," such as creating a human machine, and a short play that involves both the older and younger students.

"The high school students learn to interact with the younger kids and undertake responsibility outside their school setting," explains Monger. "And the elementary school students love the attention from the high schoolers and get exposure to drama."

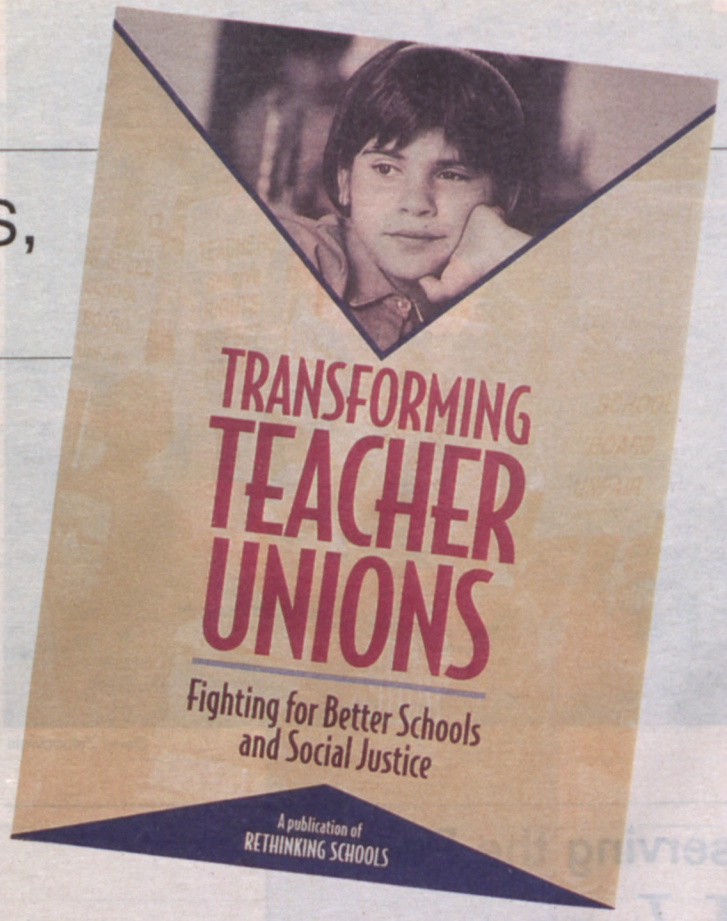
Monger says her students conduct 25 to 30 workshops a school year, in mainly third and fourth grade classes. At the end of the year, the high school students put on a big production for the elementary schools.

"It's like a working theater company," Monger says. "The students do all the teaching, they choose the plays, and they design the props and costumes."

Monger is teaching English classes this year, but her drama program just continues to grow. ✔

Kathy Cushner

From the Puzzle Solvers, Voices of Hope



Can teacher unions service their members, uplift the profession, and improve the lot of society's downtrodden?

TRANSFORMING TEACHER UNIONS
Fighting for Better Schools and Social Justice
Edited by **Bob Peterson** and **Michael Charney**, Rethinking Schools, $12.95, 800/669-4192 or www.rethinkingschools.org.

Imagine a gigantic jigsaw puzzle being pieced together by clusters of people in different rooms of a big old house, and, yes, it is a dark and stormy night outside. That's the image of teacher union transformation that emerges from this book. Teacher activists will definitely want to check it out.

The two urban teachers who edited this collection of articles, essays, and interviews included perspectives from some well-known progressives such as Jonathan Kozol, Howard Zinn, Ann Bastian, and Herbert Kohl. But the most interesting insights come from the puzzle solvers themselves—from classroom teachers and local union leaders.

In Cincinnati, the local union and the district have created a system of lead teachers to give schools the instructional leadership that principals have neither the time nor the energy to provide.

"The union has basically made it possible to advance to a new career level without having to leave teaching," reports lead teacher Diana Porter. "It's a great reform."

Two years ago in Milwaukee, the local union initiated a teacher evaluation and mentoring program the likes of which has never been seen in this troubled district. Local union president Paulette Copeland reports that while it is too early to judge the program's overall impact on the quality of teaching, it has rescued struggling teachers and led to the resignation of over 20 teachers who could not be rescued.

In Seattle, the local union negotiated a contract that ended seniority-based hiring, and replaced it with a school-based process. At each school, a hiring committee made up of teachers, staff, and, sometimes, parents interviews job applicants, submitting its top three choices to the principal for a final decision. Not all local union members approve, but most welcome the change.

And for an overview, local union president Mark Simon in Maryland's Montgomery County notes that, despite the continuing presence of dinosaurs in our school systems, "It is a great time for unions to be championing a reform agenda."

But elementary school teacher Bob Peterson will not let us grow giddy with optimism. Besides being co-editor, he contributes three bull's-eye essays. Peterson assumes the role of nudge and nag. He absolutely insists that unions confront the issues of race and inequality in our schools and society.

And who can argue with him? As the recent Milton Eisenhower Foundation report, *Locked in the Poorhouse*, observes, America's poor are getting poorer even in the midst of an economic boom; the country is resegregating; and poor African Americans and Latinos are becoming concentrated in cities from which it is ever harder to escape.

Transforming Teacher Unions has one flaw, and it is a whopper. School support personnel, with their close ties to the community and to students, play a vital role in the transformation of unions and schools, yet gain barely a mention.

Except for that caveat, this book is heartily recommended. ✔

—David Sheridan

EXCERPT

The conversations in this book focus on schools. But ultimately, the discussion is about what kind of society we want to create. We believe that teachers can make a significant contribution to building a social movement that advances both our interests as education workers and our broader interests as democratic citizens. We can build schools where all children reach their true potential. We can forge ties with parents and community groups to take up issues of school reform and social change. We can insist that our unions foster broader participation by all members and provide leadership in professional and social justice issues.

—Bob Peterson and Michael Charney in *Transforming Teachers Unions.*

BOOKS by NEA Members

Beyond the Silence: Listening for Democracy
J. Cynthia McDermott, editor. Heinemann Publishers. 160 pp. $17.50 plus $4.00 s&h to 361 Hanover Street, Portsmouth, NH 03801, 203/226-3571. This book features a series of reflective essays by teachers, counselors, and students on the value of freedom both inside and outside the classroom. Contains strategies, ideas, suggestions, and curriculum materials for teaching and encouraging educational democracy.

Technology Across the Curriculum
Marilyn Bazeli and James Heintz. $24.50 plus $5.00 UPS s&h (free s&h if shipped by Book Post) to Libraries Unlimited/Teacher Ideas Press, Dept. 9642, P.O. Box 6633, Englewood, CO 80155, 800/237-6124 (ext. 1). This book presents 75 supplemental curriculum projects designed to introduce students in grades 1-12 to media and technology. The projects, which don't focus on specific software or equipment, can be used in both basic and technologically advanced classrooms.

The Ten Commandments of Good Teaching
Vickie Gill. Corwin Press, Inc. 79 pp. $16.95 plus $3 s&h for the first copy, $1 for each additional copy. Send requests to Corwin Press, 2455 Teller Road, Thousand Oaks, CA 91320, or call 805/499-9774. Written by a veteran educator, this book offers wisdom, inspiration, and practical advice for new teachers and old-pros alike. The book includes simple tactics, techniques, and real-life examples designed to help you (re)discover the joy of teaching.

Today's Lesson
Gary Metras. 17 pp. $10.00 including s&h to Bull Thistle Press, P.O. Box 184, Jamaica, VT 05343. Who would have guessed that an ordinary school day can inspire extraordinarily lyrical moments? High school English teacher and poet Gary Metras shares his thoughts about teaching and education in this collection of 14 memorable poems. In "Today's Lesson," the simple question "Can a good man do evil?" leads readers into the magic connection between students and teacher and between Metras and his reader.

FREE OR INEXPENSIVE

Student Motivation

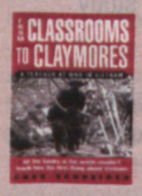
Student Motivation: Cultivating a Love of Learning explores the reasons why students lose excitement for learning and suggests ideas for preventing and reversing low student motivation. $9.50 plus $4 s&h. Contact ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management, 5207 University of Oregon, Eugene, OR 97403-5207, 800/438-8841.

Shakespeare for Kids

For children aged 9 and up, *Shakespeare for Kids: His Life and Times* contains 21 fun and creative activities that introduce kids to Shakespeare and help them understand and appreciate the bard's classic works. $15.95 plus $5 s&h. Contact Independent Publishers Group, 814 N. Franklin St., Chicago, IL 60610, 800/888-4741.

Enrico Fermi

Part of the "Oxford Portraits in Science" biography series, *Enrico Fermi and the Revolutions of Modern Physics* relates the life story of Noble Prize- winning physicist, Enrico Fermi. For ages 12 and up. $21.00 plus $4.75 s&h. Contact Oxford University Press, 198 Madison Ave., New York, NY 10016, 800/451-7556.



From Classrooms to Claymores: A Teacher at War in Vietnam

Ches Schneider. Random House/Ivy Press. 276 pp. $6.99 at your local bookstore. In 1968 the United States government began drafting school teachers for combat in Vietnam, including Ches Schneider, a junior high school history teacher from Missouri. This sometimes humorous, often gritty text is Schneider's true account of his time as a soldier in the bloody, war-torn jungles of Southeast Asia.

The 20th Century

The fourth in the "Bravo" series examining noteworthy historical achievements, *The 20th Century: An Epoch of Dramatic Change*, details the people, ideologies, wars, and inventions that shaped the past 100 years. For ages 11 and up. $8.95 plus $5.95 s&h. Contact Barron's Educational Series, Inc., 250 Wireless Blvd., Hauppauge, NY 11788, 516/434-3311. On the Web: www.barronseduc.com

Cool Chemistry

Cool Chemistry: Great Experiments with Simple Stuff includes many fun, easy, safe chemistry experiments done using ordinary things found in the home. For ages 8-12. $14.95 plus $5 s&h. Contact Sterling Publishing Co., Inc., 387 Park Ave. South, New York, NY 10016, 800/359-1680. On the Web: www.sterlingpub.com

World Discovery

Discovering World Geography with Books Kids Love, the eighth volume in the "Learning with Books Kids Love" series, integrates children's literature with geography curricula. Contains lots of activities and reproducible materials suitable for grades K-6. $17.95 plus $4 s&h. Contact Fulcrum Publishing, 350 Indiana Street, Suite 350, Golden, CO 80401, 800/992-2908. On the Web: www.fulcrum-books.com

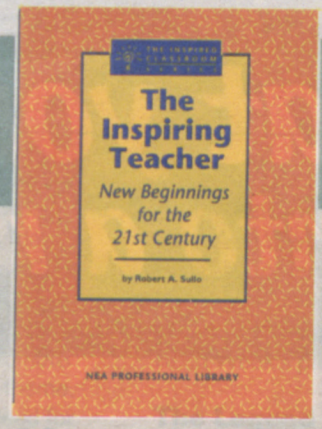
Teaching Short Stories

Short Stories in the Classroom is a collection of commentaries and essays on different methods of teaching short stories to high school and college-aged students. Contains a bibliography of teaching resources. $22.95 plus $2 s&h. Contact the National Council of Teachers of English, 1111 W. Kenyon Rd., Urbana, IL 61801-1096, 877/369-6283.

Teacher Tales

Why I Teach: Inspirational Stories from Teachers Who Make a Difference. $12.95 + $4 s&h. Prima Communications, 3875 Atherton Road, Rocklin, CA 95765.

For more Free or Inexpensive listings, see page 51.



NEW from the NEA Professional Library

The Inspiring Teacher: New Beginnings for the 21st Century
Robert Sullo.
NEA Professional Library.
167 pp. $14.95

Inspiring teachers teach more than just facts and subject matter—they help students discover the joy of becoming lifelong learners!
This book is a valuable resource for teachers new to the profession and for experienced teachers who want to revitalize their classrooms. Read about brain-based learning—the latest research on how we learn most easily and effectively. Find out how to form positive alliances with students, colleagues, and parents. Study the skills you need to help people resolve conflicts effectively. And learn how to inspire your students by drawing forth their potential.
No matter how long you've been teaching, this book will be a valuable guide as you continue your quest to become a truly inspiring teacher.

For more information or to order, call 800/229-4200

EXCERPT

What separates inspiring teachers from those who are less skilled is that inspiring teachers are initially less concerned about academic results and more concerned about how well the group is forming and whether a positive learning environment is being created: How do the students work? Are they committed to quality or do they just complete the task? Do they offer assistance to other students who are struggling? As the school year unfolds, inspiring teachers are more vigilant about the academic process and struggles of students. In this environment, effort and achievement become the rule, not the exception.

TVTIPS

Not for Ourselves Alone: The Story of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony

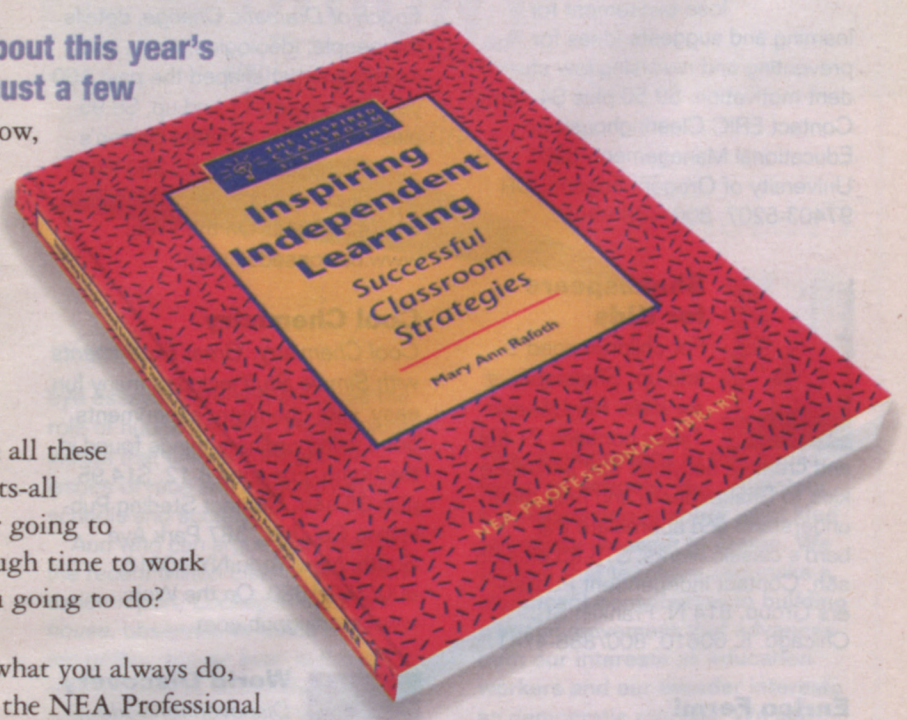
PBS, Sunday, November 7 and Monday, November 8, 8-9:30 p.m. ET, check local listings.

This documentary by Ken Burns explores the achievements of the two friends whose pioneering activism for women's equality expanded women's legal and educational opportunities, leading ultimately to the 19th Amendment, which gave women the right to vote. General Motors, the film's sponsor, is distributing educational materials to high school history teachers. Visit www.pbs.org/stantonanthony for more on women's equal rights, including curriculum materials and activities for children. For more listings, see page 48.✔

Now that you've settled into a new school year...

...don't settle for the same old same-old

You know a lot more about this year's students than you did just a few short weeks ago. You now, no doubt, have a much better sense of the many different skill levels and learning styles this year's students are bringing into your classroom.



How are you going to reach all these different kids? A one-size-fits-all approach, of course, is never going to work, and there's never enough time to work one-on-one. So what are you going to do?

This year, instead of doing what you always do, let a brand-new book from the NEA Professional Library — now available to read free on the Internet — help you help your students become more effective learners.

Successful students are students who know how to learn on their own. In the new NEA Professional Library book, *Inspiring Independent Learning*, veteran educator Mary Ann Rafoth explains her practical techniques for gently placing responsibility for learning where it belongs, in the hands of students.

Who should read *Inspiring Independent Learning*?

classroom teachers • paraeducators • guidance counselors • special educators • school psychologists

To read online, check www.nea.org/books. To order the actual book, go online to www.nea.org/books or call 1-800-229-4200.

Non-members $12.95, NEA members $10.95.
Item #2954-2-00-D Shipping & handling added to all orders.

In *Inspiring Independent Learning*, you'll find:

- Specific strategies for teaching independent learning skills to primary, intermediate, middle, and secondary grade students
- Special questionnaires and scoring guides to help you assess an individual student's—or an entire class's—metacognitive and study skills
- A peer tutoring manual to help you train peer tutors to be study skills coaches
- A model for assessing whether or not your students have acquired strategic learning skills
- Checklists and reproducible activities for helping students learn

The NEA Professional Library's Can't-Miss Promise To You:

You'll find the free complete text of *Inspiring Independent Learning* — and the text of other practical Professional Library titles — on the Web at www.nea.org/books. You can do your reading online, at no charge, or order the book, at a special NEA member discount price, and have it sent to your home. With free online access to *Inspiring Independent Learning* — as well as many other top NEA Professional Library titles — you have a great way to try before you buy!

"I wrote this book for teachers and support personnel who want to help students learn how to learn, but don't want to turn every class into a study skills lab. Inspiring Independent Learning *offers practical examples of embedded learning and study strategies that really work for students. The strategies are easy to implement and, in most cases, build on what's already happening in the classroom."*

—Pennsylvania educator and author Mary Ann Rafoth

You can put the tools for life-long learning in every student's hands!

NEA Professional Library • Distribution Center • P.O. Box 2035 • Annapolis Junction, MD 20701-2035

TV TIPS

Animal Farm

TNT, Sunday, October 3, 8-10 p.m. ET. Based on George Orwell's 1945 novel, this live-action film from Hallmark and Jim Henson's Creature Shop examines the dangers of totalitarianism with an allegorical society of farm animals whose leaders, the power-hungry pigs, control the barnyard with absolute authority. Turner Learning is offering free educators' guides on CD-ROM and the Internet, with segment summaries and character analysis, discussion questions, media literacy activities, and materials to help students understand the historical and political relevance of the film's themes. Visit www.turnerlearning.com or call 800/344-6219 for more information.

Scientific American Frontiers: Voyage to the Galapagos

PBS, Tuesday, October 5, 8-9 p.m. ET. Host Alan Alda visits the Galapagos islands for a look at the animals and birds that inspired Darwin's theory of evolution. The program explores the scientific research still conducted there and reveals the ecological threat of the islands' thousands of tourists. For interactive science materials, teaching guides, and program transcripts, visit www.pbs.org/saf.

Millennium

CNN, Sundays, October 10-December 19, 10-11 p.m. ET. This 10-part series uses computer animation and reenactments to explore the history of the last 1,000 years. Turner Learning is offering resources designed to help teachers integrate the series into their classroom curriculums, including a Web site with summaries and discussion questions for each episode, background information to give students a historical context for the programs, connection with present-day issues, and other activities, links, and interactive learning materials. Visit www.turnerlearning.com or call 800/344-6219 for more information on educator guides.

Teen Read Week on NBC

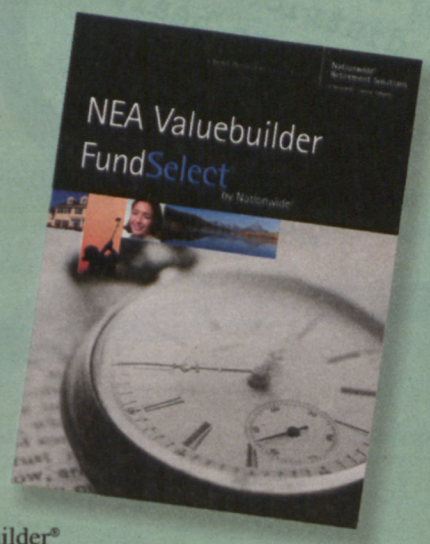
NBC, October 17-23, check local listings. NBC has joined NEA and other national partners in support of Teen Read Week, the literacy event sponsored by the American Library Association's Young Adult Library Services Association. To show that reading is a fun and valuable activity outside of the classroom, the popular TNBC Saturday programs "City Guys," "Hang Time," "One World," and "Saved by The Bell: The New Class," will promote Teen Read Week's theme, "Reading Rocks! Read for the Fun of It." For more information about these programs and NBC's participation, visit www.nbc.com/tnbc. Also see www.ala.org/teenread for more information about registration, participation tools, and Teen Read Week's partners.

The Legend of Sleepy Hollow

Odyssey, Saturday, October 23, 8-10 p.m. ET, check local listings for repeat dates. Hallmark Entertainment and the Jim Henson Creature Shop have produced a new live-action version of Washington Irving's classic folk legend. The film

Q. With over 10,000 mutual funds to choose from, how can I figure out which ones are right for me?

A.



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Now featuring NEA Valuebuilder FundSelect® with:

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- Lower initial investment
- Two new investment options

Thanks to the newly enhanced NEA Valuebuilder® Mutual Fund Program, it's now easier than ever for NEA members to select the right funds to reach their goals. The program features a wide selection of well-known funds, a low minimum deposit, and most importantly, professional investment guidance to help you select the right funds to meet your individual financial needs. So stop wondering which funds are right for you. Give us a call today, and we'll help you figure it out – FREE!

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An exclusive offering of the NEA Strategic Investment Program

nea Member Benefits
www.neamb.com

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a Nationwide Financial company

Investment advice reflected in the NEA Valuebuilder FundSelect® is offered by NEA's MBC Investor Services Company, a Registered Investment Advisor and Nationwide Investment Services Corporation, Member NASD. Securities are offered by Nationwide Investment Services Corporation, Member NASD; Nationwide Investment Services Corporation, Member NASD (In MI only). The NEA Valuebuilder FundSelect® investments are executed, cleared and held by Nationwide Advisory Services, Inc. For more complete information about the new NEA Valuebuilder FundSelect® Investment Account, including all charges and expenses, please obtain a prospectus. Prospectuses are available from your NISC representative. Please read the prospectus carefully before you invest or send money.

MFNT1099

Works 4 Me ...can work 4 You!

"Being able to recycle and share information is very helpful to all of us. THIS IS A VERY VALUABLE RESOURCE!"

Bettye Rambo-Taylor
Springfield, Illinois

"As a 2nd year teacher, I really appreciate the tips of my more experienced colleagues. I've given the address to more teachers than I can count!"

Cyndi Furr
Palm Desert, CA

"Your listserv is frequently the topic of conversation in our district where it is common to hear, 'I read it on Works4Me!'"

Cheryl Ward
Perry-Lake, Ohio

What are these educators raving about?

Works4Me, NEA's free E-mail classroom tip of the week. Get great, practical ideas from your colleagues that you can use the next day.

Sign up by simply sending an E-mail message.

1. In the "to" line, type: lyris@list.nea.org
2. In the message block, type ONLY: subscribe Works4Me
3. Send the message.

Once you've sent your E-mail, you'll get a welcome message with more information about Works4Me. Within a week, you'll get your first tip. It's that simple!

Works4Me
nea's e-mail classroom tip of the week!

nea
NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

Works4Me – another way that you can get help from NEA.

tells the story of Ichabod Crane, Sleepy Hollow's eccentric new schoolmaster, who scoffs at local legends until he encounters the mysterious Headless Horseman. KIDSNET is producing free curriculum guides designed for Children's Librarians and English/Language Arts teachers in grades 3-6. Visit www.kidsnet.org for more information.

Wonders of the African World
PBS, Monday-Wednesday, October 25-27, 9-11p.m. ET, check local listings. To dispel the myth of Africa as a primitive "dark continent" civilized by white colonists, Harvard professor Henry Louis Gates, Jr. presents this exploration of Africa's rich and varied culture—art and history from the great monuments of Egypt to the ancient Christian kingdom of Ethiopia. Gates also examines the history of the transatlantic slave trade and its meaning to modern African-Americans. Visit www.pbs.org for more information.

Dear America: So Far from Home
HBO, October, check local listings. Set in 1847, this half-hour program from Scholastic's *Dear America* book series follows Mary Driscoll, a strong, determined girl who flees the famine in Ireland only to face prejudice and harsh factory work in Massachusetts. Visit www.scholastic.com for study guides, writing activities, and more on the book series about young girls in American history.

Dragon Tales
PBS, check local listings. This new animated series from Children's Television Workshop follows the adventures of 6-year-old Emmy and her 4-year-old brother Max, who visit the magical Dragon Land. The experiences they share with their dragon friends are designed to help young viewers explore the emotional, physical, cognitive, and social challenges they face. Also visit www.pbs.org/dragontales.

Choices and Consequences
Court TV - Saturdays, 4-4:30 a.m., 1-2 p.m., check local listings. This educational initiative from Court TV is designed to help kids avoid violence by fostering an understanding of the consequences of violent or reckless behavior. The series uses actual court cases, profiles of young people, and discussion forums to address such issues as school violence, hate crimes, and teen pregnancy. Go to www.courttv.com for information about the programs, downloadable program clips, schedules, videos, resources, and curriculum guides for each program.

KIDSNET, a national resource for children's media in Washington, DC, provides these listings. For more information on children's shows, check out the KIDSNET Web site at www.kidsnet.org.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Scoop on Y2K
The millennium is just around the corner and everyone is rushing to get ready for the dreaded Y2K bug. But do

NEA Members can now get a great refinancing rate, superior customer service...

and a 4-day vacation "on the house."

We've already helped thousands of members and their families. The NEA Home Financing Program® provided by Norwest Mortgage can make refinancing or buying a new home an affordable and rewarding experience for you, too. Check out our competitive rates today by calling the NEA Mortgage QuickLine® at 1-800-NEA-4-YOU, ext. 619.

It's fast and easy to apply. Just call toll-free or stop by any of over 850 Norwest branches nationwide. You can also get free mortgage counseling or a free "break-even" analysis to see how you will benefit by refinancing. And don't forget to ask about our zero-point option, low down payments, fast loan decisions–and how to get a loan commitment* even before you start house-hunting!

Special bonus–complimentary 4-day Driveaway Getaway Vacation Package** after closing. Choose from over 100 deluxe resort destinations, including some of America's top ski resorts. For details, call your mortgage counselor or visit our web site today.

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*For qualified applicants only. Loan commitment will be subject to the terms and conditions contained in the loan commitment letter for this program. Call a mortgage counselor for details. **This offer is only valid on loan applications made on or after January 1, 1999 and closed on or prior to December 31, 1999 through this program. Offer is subject to loan approval and other terms and conditions. This offer is not available on home equity loans and lines of credit. Call 1-800-632-4968 for additional "Driveaway Getaway" vacation package details and terms and conditions. The "Driveaway Getaway" vacation package is a program of MMS Incentives, which is solely responsible for the administration and all aspects of the vacation package. Norwest Mortgage is in no way responsible or liable for the services. Equal Housing Lender.

HENT1099

Say goodbye to your high-interest debt for good with the NEA's lowest personal loan rates ever!

Consolidate and save with rates as low as 11.99%.* Thanks to our lowest rates ever, you can now save up to hundreds of dollars a year in finance charges by consolidating your high-interest bills into one low monthly payment with the NEA Credit Plan® personal loan. Loan amounts range from $3,000 to $25,000**—all with a fixed Annual Percentage Rate (APR) as low as 11.99%. There are no lengthy applications or collateral required. And you can even apply by phone and **receive a loan decision in as little as 15 minutes!**

Enjoy flexible terms and no payments for 90 days.† With the NEA Credit Plan personal loan, you can choose between 24 to 84 months to repay your loan, depending on how much you borrow. If you like, you can even pay back your loan early with no penalty. And now for a limited time, you can take advantage of **our special 90-day deferred payment option.** To apply call **1-800-545-4094,** Monday–Thursday, 8 a.m. to 9 p.m., and Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.(EST) and mention **priority code VZWD.**

Affordable Monthly Repayment Chart

Loan Amount	Term: 24 months	36 months	48 months	60 months	72 months	84 months
$3,000	$147	$104	$82	N/A	N/A	N/A
$10,000	$488	$344	$273	$231	N/A	N/A
$15,000	N/A	$516	$409	$346	N/A	N/A
$25,000	N/A	$860	$682	$576	$506	$457

These estimated payments are based on an Annual Percentage Rate (APR) of 11.99%.* Actual payment amount and term may vary.†

Call 1-800-545-4094

and mention priority code VZWD today to receive your loan decision in as little as 15 minutes.

nea Member Benefits

www.neamb.com

MBNA AMERICA®

*The Annual Percentage Rate (APR) may range from a fixed 11.99% to 17.99%, based on your income and creditworthiness. If you are not approved for the lowest available APR under this program and MBNA is unable to contact you, all funds may be sent to you in check form for your endorsement.

**Receipt of the maximum credit line is subject to MBNA America's income and creditworthiness standards. There is a check transaction fee equal to 1% of the U.S. Dollar amount of each check you use to obtain an advance (fee: minimum $2; maximum $10).

†Your repayment term begins at the end of the 90-day deferral period. All payments are deferred for three months after the purchase date. Finance charges continue to accrue. You may prepay at anytime without penalty.

The NEA Credit Plan personal loan has been developed for NEA members and their families only. If a member decides not to renew his/her membership that person and their family may no longer be eligible to receive the preferred rates and fees offered through the NEA Credit Plan personal loan program. If eligible, a replacement loan may be offered. Any account opened in response to this offer will be governed by the laws of Delaware.

The NEA is not involved in the credit application process. All applications are subject to a confidential standard review by MBNA America. The account is issued and administered by MBNA America Bank, N.A.

MBNA and MBNA America are federally registered service marks of MBNA America Bank, N.A., P.O. Box 15133, Wilmington, DE 19885-5133.

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Absolutely NO membership dues are used to market this program.

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CPNT1099

your students understand what Y2K really is? To help teachers educate students about the Y2K problem, The President's Council on Year 2000 Conversion, the Newspaper Association of America, and the National Newspaper Association initiated the Y2K Youth Education Program. Through the program, newspaper publishers nationwide will distribute Y2K educational supplements, activity ideas, and resource guides to schools in the communities they serve. For information on how to participate in the program, call 415/641-0611 or visit the President's Y2K Council online at www.y2k.gov.

Learn More about Melanoma

Did you know that melanoma (skin cancer) is the most prevalent type of cancer among people aged 25-29? Yet, in a 1996 survey, the Centers for Disease Control found that 74 percent of all high school and college-aged individuals had little or no knowledge about melanoma, the easiest to spot of all cancers. To find out more about this deadly disease and how to prevent it, visit the Melanoma Education Fund's Web site at www.skincheck.com.

Violence Prevention

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month. NEA has teamed with the Family Violence Prevention Fund to promote efforts that reduce the incidence of domestic violence.

To learn how you can make a difference in your community, call 800/END-ABUSE. If you or someone you know is in an abusive relationship, call 800/799-SAFE for help and referrals to domestic violence programs. Also check your state laws to learn about your responsibilities as a school employee for reporting suspected child abuse.

For more on creating safe schools go to the NEA Web site at: www.nea.org/issues/safecho/.

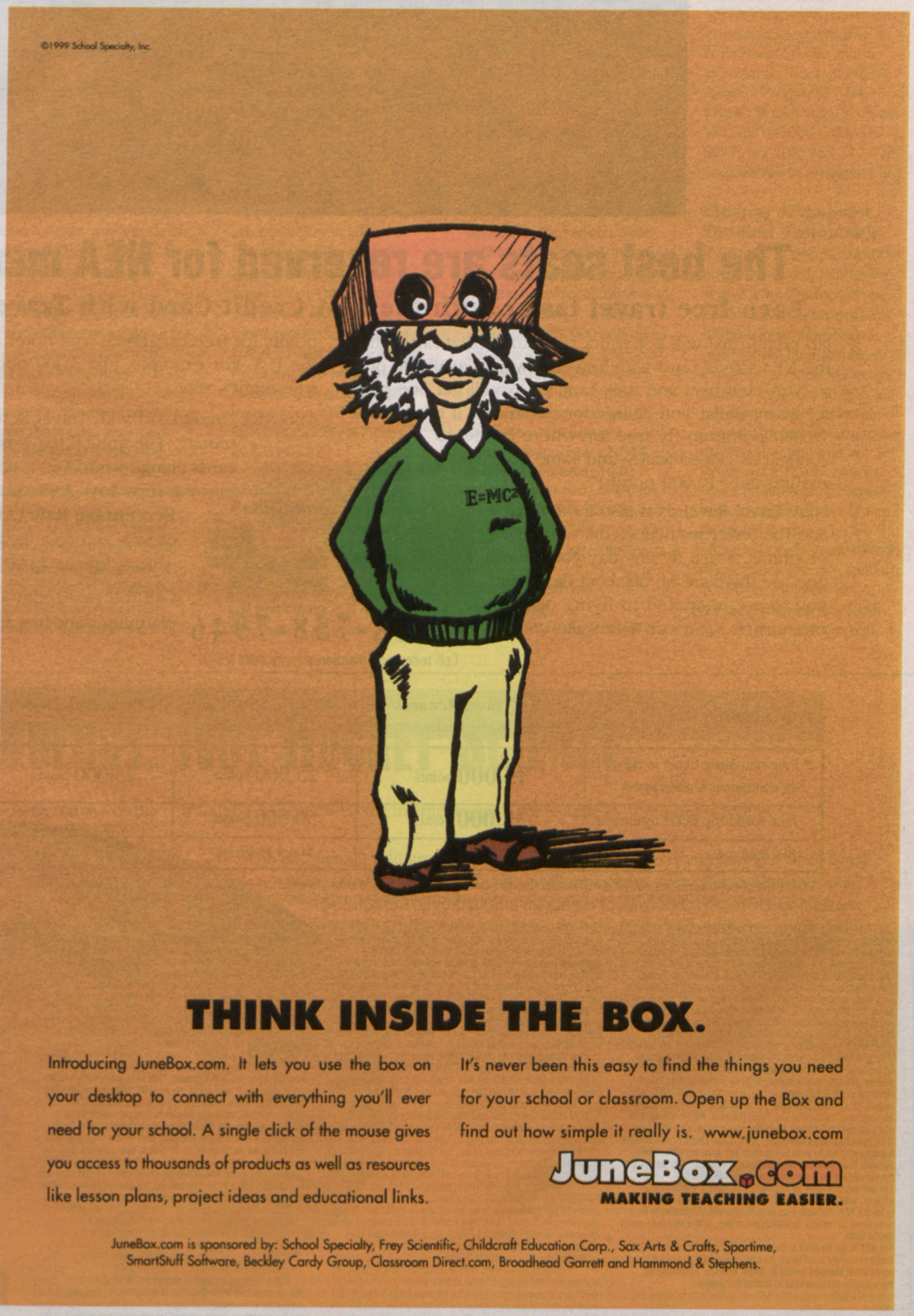
Fire Prevention Week

October 3-9 is Fire Prevention Week and the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) would like all elementary teachers to participate in "The Great Escape," a campaign to teach young children how to develop and practice a home fire escape plan. "The Great Escape" centers around two main events: a unified North American fire drill on Wednesday, October 6 at 7 p.m. and two grand prize contests. The winner of each contest will receive a trip for four to Walt Disney World.

For more information, go to the NFPA Web site at www.nfpa.org. Children can go to www.sparky.org.

Y2K UniServ Interns

The NEA seeks candidates for its Year 2000 UniServ Intern Program for Ethnic Minorities and Women. Candidates must be active NEA members for at least one year and have basic knowledge and understanding of the Association at the local and state level. UniServ interns receive four-and-a-half weeks training and a three-month field assignment. The NEA does not guarantee employment as hiring is a state/local decision. Candidates must send a letter of interest by December 10 (by U.S. mail or Fedex only) to Brenda Vincent, UniServ Intern Program, NEA Membership and Affiliates, 1201 16th St. N.W., Washington, DC 20036. If you have questions, contact your local UniServ Director.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No credit card will get you a free airline seat faster than the NEA Credit Card with Travel Rewards, available only to NEA members and their families.§ You'll get one point for every dollar you charge for purchases. It takes only 15,000 points to fly free anywhere in the 48 contiguous United States–and some destinations require only 10,000 points!*

NEA Travel Rewards is also more flexible and has fewer restrictions than most other programs. You'll fly any day you choose because there are no blackout dates, and you're not restricted to flying on any one airline. You can even use your points for free car rentals and hotel accommodations in the U.S. For example, just 3,000 points will get you a free night's stay.

The NEA Credit Card with Travel Rewards also saves you money. The annual fee is only $30, while other cards charge up to $60 a year.† Best of all, you'll enjoy a **new low 2.9% introductory Annual Percentage Rate (APR)** on cash advance checks and balance transfers, and a fixed APR as low as 13.99% for purchases.†

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Call toll free today to apply – and start planning your free vacation!

Travel Benefits	NEA Travel Rewards All Major Airlines	AMEX Delta SkyMiles® Delta Airlines	Citibank AAdvantage® American Airlines	First Chicago Mileage Plus® United Airlines
* Free round-trip ticket in the 48 contiguous United States	**15,000** points	25,000 points	25,000 points	25,000 points
Free round-trip ticket to Europe	**35,000** points	50,000 points	40,000 – 60,000 points (changes seasonally)	50,000 points
Blackout dates	None	Major Holidays	Major Holidays	Major Holidays

For the NEA Travel Rewards Program, the corresponding maximum dollar value for a ticket and the award levels shown above are: 15,000 pts/$500; 35,000 pts/$1,000. For travel within a single U.S. zone, the award level and corresponding maximum dollar value is 10,000 pts/$300; for travel within North America and Mexico: 25,000 pts/$600. There may be up to two connections per flight. Information shown in chart is accurate as of 8/1/99, based on an independently conducted telephone survey.

† The annual fee for the NEA Travel Rewards Credit Card is $30. The Annual Percentage Rates (APRs) for purchases and ATM and Bank cash advances are 13.99% for the NEA Travel Rewards *Platinum Plus*℠ card or 14.99% for the Travel Rewards School Days card. The current promotional APR offer for cash advance checks and balance transfers made with either account is 2.9% through your first four statement closing dates commencing the month after your account is opened. Thereafter, the APR that will be applied to new and outstanding cash advance balances (consisting of cash advance checks and balance transfer transactions) will be 13.99% for the NEA Travel Rewards *Platinum Plus* account or 14.99% for the Travel Rewards School Days account. Transaction fee for Bank and ATM cash advances: 2% of each cash advance ($2 minimum, $10 maximum). Transaction fee for credit card cash advance checks: 1% of cash advance ($2 minimum, $10 maximum). Transaction fee for the purchase of wire transfers, money orders, bets, lottery tickets, and casino gaming chips: 2% of each such purchase ($2 minimum, $10 maximum). The transaction fees for two specially designated credit card cash advance checks are waived. **MBNA may allocate your payments to balances (including new transactions) with lower APRs before balances with higher APRs. Cash advances and balance transfers may not be used to pay off or pay down any other MBNA account. Cash advances obtained through a Bank or ATM transaction are not eligible for the promotional 2.9% APR offer.**

You will automatically be considered for an NEA *Platinum Plus* account, with a minimum credit line of $5,500. If you do not qualify for the NEA *Platinum Plus* account, you will automatically be considered for an NEA School Days account, with a minimum credit line of $500.

The NEA is not involved in the credit decision process: standard credit procedure is followed. All applications will be subject to a confidential standard review by MBNA America. Absolutely NO membership dues are used to market this program.

§ Eligible NEA family members include parents, spouse, domestic partner and children.

The NEA Credit Card Program® has been developed for NEA members and their families only. If a member decides not to renew his/her membership, that person and their family will no longer be eligible to receive the preferred rates, fees and special promotions (including Travel Rewards) offered through the NEA Credit Card Program. If eligible, a replacement card will be offered. This credit card program is issued and administered by MBNA America Bank, N.A.

* **NEA Travel Rewards Highlights of Terms and Conditions:** These are highlights of the complete Terms and Conditions of the NEA Travel Rewards program ("Program"). The Program offers air travel, auto rental and hotel accommodation rewards in exchange for Travel Rewards *Point* earnings *("Point(s)")*.

Air travel rewards consist of a scheduled round-trip ticket for travel within or between two designated zones of the lower 48 states (Zone 1 – locations within the Eastern and Central time zones; Zone 2 – locations within the Mountain and Pacific time zones); plus travel from Alaska and Hawaii. The number of *Points* and corresponding maximum dollar value of tickets ("MDV") required for travel are: for travel wholly contained within Zone 1 or Zone 2: 10,000/$300; between Zones 1 and 2: 15,000/$500; to Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean, the Bahamas or Bermuda: 25,000/$600; to Europe (and any other international destination which may be available): 35,000/$1,000.

MDV includes taxes and destination fees. Tickets will be Economy class and will be the lowest available published fare at the time of booking. Whenever possible a direct flight will be booked; there is a limit of two connections. Actual date and time of travel are subject to availability. You may select a carrier and/or upgrade to first class travel: if you choose either, you may charge the cost difference to your *Travel Rewards* credit card and earn *Points* for the transaction. Additional terms apply. All reservations and ticketing must be at least 21 days before travel date. All travel must include a Saturday night stay. For international travel, your stay must be at least seven days but no more than 30 days. Other restrictions apply. Common Carrier Travel Accident Insurance coverage is applicable to any airline ticket obtained with *Points* and/or paid for with your *Travel Rewards* credit card. See your card benefits materials for coverage details.

Automobile rental rewards are for **midsize** vehicles with pickup and return to the same rental location anywhere within the United States. Advance reservations of at least seven days are required and are subject to availability. You must meet all credit, age, and driver requirements in effect at the time and place of rental. 2,000 *Points* are needed for each single day rental (MDV: $60, including tax); 1,000 *Points* for a single weekend day rental (MDV: $35, including tax) and 9,000 *Points* for a seven-day rental period (MDV: $300, including tax). Optional charges are your responsibility. Other conditions apply. Your credit card supplemental collision damage deductible waiver coverage is available.

Hotel accommodation rewards are valid at participating properties in the United States. Advance reservations of at least seven days are required and are subject to availability. There is no minimum stay requirement. Rewards are valid for a standard single- or double-occupancy room with a nightly rate, including tax. Personal, optional and incidental expenses are your responsibility. These are the current requirements for a hotel accommodation reward: for a nightly room rate up to $110: 3,000 *Points* and for a room rate up to $200: 5000 *Points*.

The Program has a yearly fee, currently $30. You may accrue an annual maximum of 70,000 *Points*. Your *Points* may not be combined with anyone else's *Points*. *Points* will expire five years from the end of the year in which they are earned. *Points* have no cash value. *Points* may be earned and redeemed only if your account is in good standing. **Earn one *Point* for every dollar in Net Purchases charged to the account. "Net Purchase" means the purchase of goods or services by you and your authorized user(s) made with the NEA *Travel Rewards* credit card, less credits and plus or minus any adjustments. Net Purchases does not include finance charges; cash advance transactions; any balance(s) permissibly transferred between MBNA accounts; cash advances redesignated as purchases; the purchase of money orders, wire transfers, bets, lottery tickets, or casino gaming chips; unauthorized charges; credit life insurance premiums; late or over-the-credit-limit fees; and other fees and charges assessed on your account. Fractions of dollar values of Net Purchases will be rounded to the nearest whole dollar.**

There are no exchanges or refunds for no-shows or partially used rewards. Lost, stolen, or otherwise destroyed travel documents may not be reissued or replaced. *Points* may not be combined with any other discounts, special rates, promotions, or other rewards programs offered by MBNA or any other entity, including airline frequent flyer programs or airline credit card programs. No retroactive *Points* will be awarded.

MBNA reserves the right to change any or all of the terms, benefits, or conditions of participation in this program, including, but not limited to, withdrawing, limiting or modifying any reward or increasing the number of *Points* required for any reward. Violations of the terms of this program may result in liability for damages, termination of program eligibility, loss of *Points*, and revocation of issued but unused rewards.

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AWARDS/GRANTS

The Compaq Computer Corporation has named three NEA members as "National Models" for their innovative classroom computing ideas. The honorees were among 101 winners of Compaq's Teach With Computer Technology Grant and received a new multimedia PC for their schools and an all-expense paid trip to demonstrate their winning computer projects at the National Educational Computing Conference.
The National Model winners are:

- Doris Morris, a fifth grade teacher from Wilmington, Delaware, who had her students create a Web site for animals at the Brandywine Zoo. (www.k12.de.us/warner/zoointro.htm)
- William Munn, a high school history and English teacher from Marion, Indiana, who guided his 11th and 12th graders to make a Web site of their community's history. (www.marion.lib.in.us/history/index.html)
- Nancy Reynolds, a seventh grade teacher from Barnesville, Ohio, who initiated an Internet-based current events research project on select African countries.

For more information, visit Compaq on the Web: www.compaq.com/education/k12.

Science Talent

The students of 15 NEA members came away with the top prizes in the sixth through ninth grade division of the 1999 Duracell Batteries/National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) Scholarship Competition. The students won a combined total of $62,000 in U.S. Savings Bonds for inventing new useful battery powered devices. For contest details and a list of winners, visit the NSTA online at: www.nsta.org/programs/duracell/winners.htm. For an entry form for next year's competition, call 888/255-4242. Entry deadline: January 12.

Ellender Fellowships

Fellowships are available for high school teachers to travel to Washington, DC, with their students to participate in a special program to help them take new civic knowledge and teaching resources back to their classrooms. Teachers' costs are fully covered, with the exception of a few meals. Any high school teacher is eligible when accompanying a delegation of at least five students from his or her school. Applications are due throughout September and December. For more information, contact Magen Waterhouse, Outreach Coordinator, Close Up Foundation, 44 Canal Center Plaza, Alexandria, VA 22314, 800/CLOSE-UP.

Fulbright Program

This program provides opportunities for two-year college faculty, and elementary and secondary teachers and administrators to teach in schools abroad. Candidates must be U. S. citizens, fluent in English, have a Bachelor's degree or higher, have three years of full-time teaching experience, and have a current full-time academic position in an appropriate subject area and at a teaching or administrative level appropriate for the application. The application deadline is October 15. For more information, contact Fulbright Teacher Exchange Program, 600 Maryland Avenue, S.W., Room 320, Washington, DC 20024-2520. 800/726-0479 or 202/314-3527.

Mandel Teacher Fellowship

The U. S. Holocaust Memorial Museum is offering fellowships to 25 secondary school educators. Fellows will participate in a five-day, all-expense paid summer Institute at the museum. Teachers, librarians, and instructional media specialists are encouraged to apply. Deadline, March 1, 1999. For information, contact coordinator Stephen Feinberg by fax 202/314-7888, E-mail sfeinberg@ushmm.org or mail at Mandel Teacher Fellowship Program, Education Division, U. S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, 100 Raoul Wallenberg Place, S.W., Washington, DC 20024-2150.

Water Works Award

This award recognizes one pre-college teacher who has developed an instructional program and/or innovation, using a multicultural approach, that encourages elementary, middle, or high school students to explore and enjoy sciences related to drinking water. The award consists of $1,000 and up to $500 to attend the National Science Teachers Association National Convention. The application deadline is November 15. For more information, contact NSTA Awards Programs, 1840 Wilson Boulevard, Arlington, VA 22201-3000. 703/312-9217, fax 703/243-7177. Or on the Web at www.nsta.org.

Distinguished Teaching

Teachers (K-college level) who have made extraordinary contributions to the field of science teaching are eligible for a special National Science Teachers Association award. The number of awards given each year is at the discretion of the judges. The award consists of a formal citation, two nights in a hotel, and $100 towards expenses to attend the NSTA National Convention. The application deadline is November 15. For more information, contact NSTA Awards Programs, 1840 Wilson Boulevard, Arlington, VA 22201-3000. 703/312-9217, fax 703/243-7177. Or on the Web at www.nsta.org.

Eleanor Roosevelt Teacher Fellowship

Designed to promote gender equity in school, this fellowship is available to women public school teachers with at least three consecutive years of full-time teaching experience. Stipends range from $1,000 to $10,000. A highlight of the fellowship year is attendance at a four-day Teacher Institute in Washington, D. C. Applicants must be U.S. citizens or permanent residents and teach full-time at a U. S. public school in grades K-12. Applications are due January 10. For more information, contact American Association of University Women

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That's why before the NEA recommends any candidates, we make sure they measure up on the issues we care about:

- **Strengthening Public Education**
  Increased funding for schools and colleges, opposing vouchers and privatization, and modernizing school facilities.

- **Ensuring Children's Health & Safety**
  Supporting safe schools programs, continuing Head Start, and increasing health and nutrition programs.

- **Maximizing Student Learning**
  Smaller class sizes, early childhood education, programs for disadvantaged children, vocational education, college scholarships, school-to-work, and updating technology.

- **Respecting School Employees**
  Higher salaries to keep the best employees, inclusion in decision making, and increased funding for professional development and professional growth.

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Educational Foundation, 2201 North Dodge Street, P.O. Box 4030, Iowa City, IA 52243-4030, 319/337-1716, fax 319/337-1204.

Hollingworth Award Competition

This $2,000 award is an international competition for proposals of publishable research projects concerning gifted and/or talented young people. Completed research projects are ineligible. Applications are due January 15. For more information, contact Hollingworth Award Committee, National Association for Gifted Children, 1707 L Street, N.W., Suite 550, Washington, DC 20036, 202/785-4268. Or on the Web at www.nagc.org.

A.Verville Fellowship

The A. Verville Fellowship is a competitive in-residence fellowship intended for the analysis of major trends, developments, and accomplishments in the history of aviation or space studies. A stipend of $30,000 will be awarded for a 12-month fellowship, with limited additional funds for travel and miscellaneous expenses. Applications are mailed out November 15 and are due January 15. Requests for application packages should be sent to: Fellowship Coordinator, National Air and Space Museum, MRC 312, Washington, DC 20560. For more information, contact the Fellowship Coordinator at 202/357-2515.

Home Economics Teacher of the Year

This award recognizes outstanding educational programs, methods, techniques, and activities that provide the stimulus for and give visibility to home economics. The recipient of the national award receives $1,000, a plaque, and financial support of up to $500 to attend the AAFCS Annual Meeting. The postmark deadline for submission of nominations is January 15. For more information, contact AAFCS, Awards, Fellowships, and Grants Program, 1555 King Street, Alexandria, VA 22314, 703/706-4600, fax 703/706-HOME.

Science Teacher of the Year

The National Science Foundation recently presented several NEA members with the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching. Winners received a $7,500 grant for their school's math and science programs, and an all-expense paid trip to Washington, D. C.

For a list of NEA award winners, go to the NEA Today Web site, www.nea.org/neatoday. If you'd like more information and an award application visit the NSF Web site at: www.her.nsf.gov/HER/ESIE/awards/1998.htm

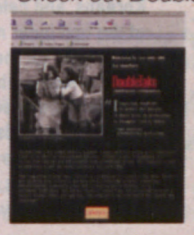
WEB WINNERS

Lesson Plans

Looking for supplementary materials to assist you in the classroom? Check out Teaching Resources at www.oise.utoronto.ca/~stuserv/teaching/tresourc.htm. Included are various ideas for lesson plans, special projects, activities, games, and links to other related sites.

Language and Arts

Check out DoubleTake



Online Classroom Companion at www.doubletakemagazine.org/teachersguide. Photography, poetry, fiction, and essays are divided into thematic units that correspond to common high school curricula.

Electronic Journal

Subscribe to *CSS Journal*, an electronic educational journal at www.cssjournal.com/. It is full of articles and papers about technology in K-12 social studies classrooms.

Searching the Web

Both novice and experienced Web searchers can find information and examples of how to refine their searches on Searching the Web at http://numa.niti.org/enc. The site covers question analysis, search strategies, and search engines.

Energy

Elementary teachers can find energy-related curriculum aids at www.ase.org/educators. Also includes lesson plans about energy conservation and efficiency, and suggestions for incorporating energy lessons into math, science, language arts, and computer curricula.

Rain Forests

Want to get involved in saving endangered rain forests? Rainforest Action Network announces Kid's Corner, an eight-step guide explaining how children can help save endangered rain forests, plus a question-and-answer forum about rain forest deforestation and information about the animals of the rain forest. Go to www.ran.org.

Internet Safety

Go to www.cybersmart.org

for resources and information about Internet safety, manners, advertising, research, and technology. Teachers can use the site's instructional framework as a guide to prepare lessons.

K-8 Teachers

At www.teachernet.com/ you'll find lesson plans, Idea-a-Day Activities, a teacher contact database, and more—all for the K-8 teacher.

Professional Development

For information on teacher training seminars, conferences, and conventions, go to The Society for Developmental Education's Web site at www.socdeved.com/.

One-Stop Shopping

The Educational Information and Resource Center at www.eirc.org/tour.html offers resources on topics ranging from special education services to creative problem solving, from graphics and printing to computer instruction, and from teacher and curriculum design to international exchange programs.

Math/Science

Explore www.enc.org/ for a great selection of K-12 math and science resources.

NASA

To learn about NASA and interact with NASA's staff, link to NASA's Quest project at http://quest.arc.nasa.gov/.

Curriculum

Massachusetts NEA member Kathy Schrock's Guide

for Educators is a categorized list of sites useful for enhancing school curriculums and teacher professional growth. Visit www.discoveryschool.com/schrockguide/.

Geography

For facts on any country in the world, go to www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/.

Got Change?

Resources for Change assists educators in creating and identifying professional development opportunities. Go to http://change.enc.org/change/05rec/index.htm for information about existing professional development programs, to help educators create and identify professional development opportunities, and contact information for organizations that can help you explore school improvement.

From Zero to Eight

To exchange information with other educators interested in quality care and learning for children from birth through 8, visit www.ume.maine.edu/%7Ecofed/eceol/welcome.html.

Practical Physics

The Amazing Physics of

Everyday Objects Web site is a great place to go for simple and fun basic physics and chemistry experiments for middle and high school students. Includes easy-to-understand experiment explanations and hypotheses. Ideal for classroom use. You can visit the site at: http://129.82.166.181/default.html

Making Sense of Greek

Want to know more about the man who coined the term "Eureka!"? This colorful and lighthearted biographic page introduces elementary school students to the ancient Greek thinker Archimedes. Includes links to valuable math and science educational sites. Try the Archimedes' Eureka! Web site at http://tqjunior.advanced.org/4116/History/archimedes.htm.

Russian Beauty

For information on the development of Russian naval powers, try the Russian Navy Web site. Beautiful artwork illustrates this succinct history of warfare and sailing, organized into 11 chapters. A good supplement for high school world history and European cultures curriculums. Go to www.neva.ru.

Theater of Electricity

Learn all about the concepts of electricity at this Web site provided by the Museum of Science in Boston. Included are multiple photographs, an explanation of lightning, a video of how the Van de Graaff Generator works, and classroom experiments. Visit www.mob.org.

ePALS

To show your students that it's a small world after all, try ePALS. This Web site bills itself as the Internet's largest wired classroom network with 1 million users in over 100 countries. It features a search engine, chat rooms, video and voice conferencing, teaching tips, and e-mail addresses all designed to set up pen pal communication between classrooms around the globe. Go to www.epals.com.

Free E-Newsletter

The Learning Company offers educators a free online classroom newsletter with links, lesson plans, ideas, and resources. To sign up, go to www.learningcompanyschool.com/school/resource/flyer.asp.

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Analyzing Education Trends

Best Practice Briefs is a new monthly publication from Michigan State University's Outreach Partnerships that

analyzes education trends and gives advice on translating research findings into specific action steps. Individual copies $2.50 each, annual subscription $25. Contact MSU Outreach Partnerships, Room 6,

Kellogg Center, East Lansing, MI 48824-1022.

Remembering Favorite Books

Famous children's authors discuss childhood memories of their favorite books and the lifelong joy of reading in *Books Remembered: Nurturing the Budding Writer.* $25 plus $6.50 s&h. Contact the Children's Book Council, Inc., 568 Broadway, New York, NY 10012, 800/999-2160. On the Web: www.cbcbooks.org

The Good Old Days

Were the "wonder years" of the 1950s and '60s really as pleasant as we remember? With anecdotes, facts, photos, and advertisements, *The Way Things Never Were: The Truth About the 'Good Old Days'* shows what American life was really like in the two decades after WWII. $16 at bookstores or contact Atheneum Books for Young Readers, Simon & Schuster, 1230 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020. On the Web: www.simonsayskids.com

The Ultimate Field Trip

Imagine taking a group of middle school students on an excursion deep into the jungles of Peru. One daring school group got to do just that in 1993. Read all about their amazing journey in *Ultimate Field Trip 1: Adventures in the Amazon Rain Forest.* Ages 8-12. $5.99 at bookstores or contact Simon & Schuster, 1230 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020. On the Web: www.simonsayskids.com

Reading Assessment Alternatives

Here is a collection of articles and commentaries by scholars and educators, *Reading Assessment: Principles and Practices for Elementary Teachers* suggests alternatives to standardized testing of student achievement. $26.95 plus $3 s&h. Contact the International Reading Association, 800 Barksdale Rd., P.O. Box 8139, Newark, DE 19714-8139, 302/731-1600. On the Web: at www.reading.org.

DIVERSITY Calendar

Here are a few listings to help you plan school activities for the many ethnic celebrations taking place in the next few months.

December

Ramadan
Beginning on the 8th, this is the ninth and holiest month of the Islamic year. It is a time of intensive worship, purification, and fasting. The Council on Islamic Education, a resource organization, offers workshops, conferences, and a catalogue of resources to educators. Contact CIE, P.O. Box 20186, Fountain Valley, CA 92728-0186, 714/839-2929. E-mail info@cie.org or visit the Web at www.cie.org.

Kwanzaa
This seven-day celebration, which starts on the 26th, began in 1966 to honor African Americans. It is based on seven principles reminiscent of traditional African harvest festivals: unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity, and faith. Visit the Kwanzaa Information Center on-line at www.melanet.com/kwanzaa/ to learn more about the holiday, get a list of resources, and find out about activities in your area.

January

Japanese New Year
One of the biggest celebrations in Japan, this holiday runs from January 1–3. Businesses are closed during this period, which is also known as Shogatsu, and people visit shrines and eat special foods for good fortune and health in the coming year. Entrances to houses are also specially decorated. Check out www.japan-guide.com/e/e2064.html for more information.

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, January 17
This U.S. federal holiday commemorates the life of Dr. King, Jr., the acknowledged leader of the civil rights movement in the 1960s. King won the 1964 Nobel Peace Prize and is famous for his acclaimed speech, "I Have a Dream." Visit the Web at www.pipeline.com/~juel/mlk.html for more than 20 links to sites that include essays, timelines, resources, first-hand accounts, and much more on King.

February

Black History Month
February is dedicated to recognizing the achievements of African Americans. This month was selected because of the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglas, two individuals who have greatly influenced the lives of African Americans. The Black History Month Center – at www.galegroup.com/library/resrcs/blkhstry/index.htm – offers biographies, quizzes, student activities, and resources.

Lunar New Year, February 5
The lunar New Year is observed by both Chinese and Koreans, and celebrations last for the first three days of the first lunar month. This year marks the year of the dragon for the Chinese. Traditionally, people dress up in costumes, bad spirits are warded off with firecrackers and mock dragons, money is exchanged, and special foods are eaten. For books, videos, and activity books on the lunar New Year, contact Master Communications, AsiaForKids at 800/765-5885 or visit the Web at www.afk.com.

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Books

The Complete Teacher's Guide to Retirement Wealth. A must read for every educator. Visit us at www.retirement-wealth.com.

Alternatives to abuse, rage, violence, defeat, suicide. $1 for catalog. Kalinke Books, 196 Marveline Dr., Lakeland, FL 33815

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Receive higher-than-average returns and an introductory bonus rate with the NEA-Sponsored FDIC-Insured Money Market Account. For more information, call 800/ 637-4636, M-F, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. (or Saturday, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.) ET.

NEA Credit Plan® offers a low cost, no collateral loan, which can lower your monthly bills. For more information, call 800/637-4636, M-F, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. (or Satur-day, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.) ET.

Health Resources

Considering Your Options
A new fast paced video from the NEA Health Information Network. "Considering Your Options" combines animated segments with real life interviews with teens talking about their choices and concerns about sexual activity and various birth control methods including abstinence. A teacher's discussion guide included. $15+s/h. Call 800/229-4200. stock # A05-9001-2-00.

Are you having problems with the air in your school?

The NEA Health Information Network supports the use of EPA's *Tools for Schools Action Kit* to prevent and manage indoor air quality problems. The kit includes guidance, a problem solving wheel, and video. Available for $22. To order please call 202/512-1800 (order #055-000005033-6).

New Partnership for Older Women's Health

Women today can expect to live as much as one-third of their lives beyond menopause — the milestone that marks the end of their reproductive years. The changes that occur in a woman's body after menopause can increase the risk of getting some diseases, and other diseases just occur more often in older women. Learn more about menopause and other important women's health issues from the Partnership for Post-Menopausal Women's Health. Call toll-free 877-98-PMHEALTH or visit **www.womensorganizations**

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With the NEA Level Premium Term Life Insurance Plan, you get up to $250,000 of fixed-rate term life insurance protection and your premiums will remain the same until you reach age 70. For more information, call 800/637-4636, Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. (or Saturday, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.) ET.

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Publications

Free catalog: Time-saving craft kits for elem. ClassKits@ 1-800-771-7977. www.classkits.com.

Free! 101 English Lesson Plans. Samples Time/work savers grade 4-12. 800-294-5171/tip-pub.com.

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offers guaranteed savings at up to 80% off the cover price on over 450 titles! For more information, call 800/637-4636, Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. (Saturday, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.) ET.

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NEA's e-mail classroom tip of the week!

A weekly practical classroom tip from NEA. Visit the helpfrom.nea.org Web site to sign up to receive this free weekly tip via E-mail.

The Education Technology Promotion Guide
from the Software Publishers Association offers guidelines for publishing the success of your educational technology program.
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Curious about peer review? Want to know how brain research can improve your teaching? Looking for effective discipline strategies? Try School Stories andTeacher TV videos from the NEA Professional Library. Visit www.nea.org/books.

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Peace Corps seeks volunteers to serve in overseas locations. 800/424-8580; visit web site www.peacecorps.gov or write 1111 20th St., NW, Room 8436, Washington, DC 20526 for information.

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in the Light Lane

One Ringy Dingy.....

Every morning in my third grade class we have sharing. One of my students shared an object that fascinated the class. She showed how it worked by putting her finger in it and turning it. Everyone wanted to try it. They begged me to hook it up in the classroom to see if it would really work. What was this scientific marvel? A rotary phone!

Vance Carruth
Huntington Beach, California

Our seventh-graders finished a unit on the immune system by visiting a local church cemetery. They learned that early in the century many children succumbed to childhood diseases because there were no vaccinations.

One fellow got the point of this exercise, but was off on his spelling. When asked on a test the reason so many children were buried at the cemetery, he wrote, "Those little babies died because they didn't get vacations."

Juli Hauser
Burlington, North Carolina

After introducing a unit on medieval times to my sixth-grade reading class, I asked students to write what they already knew about the Middle Ages. One girl wrote: "The Middle Ages is from about 45-50. It can also be from about 40-55 or younger. People in the Middle Ages can still walk and do activities."

Barbara Gilson
Port Royal, Pennsylvania

When practicing the school play *Much Ado About Nothing*, the boy who played Claudio kept stumbling over some of Claudio's angry speeches. He had a hard time with one line in particular: "You are more intemperate in your blood than Venus!" One of his more memorable versions: "You are more impotent than Venus!"

Samantha Dunaway
Nome, Alaska

I get very creative responses to test questions at the beginning of the year, since much of the material is new to students. The directions for one section of a test asked students to name each polygon. Under the picture of a pentagon, one of my students innocently answered "home plate."

Colleen Wright
Cudahy, Wisconsin

My students are truly from the computer age. Seventh-grader Joshua was writing a report on a great artist. I reminded him several times to indent the first word of each paragraph.

He seemed to ignore me, so I pointed and said, "You must indent or move the first word in about five spaces." He finally looked at me and said, "Oh, you mean tab in!"

Sue Langan
Whittier, California

I was teaching my students a unit on contractions one day. I put several examples on the board and asked the students if they could define what contractions are. One of my fourth graders innocently asked, "Isn't that like when you're going to have a baby or something?"

Kimberly Whitaker
Burley, Idaho

While reading my third graders' daily journal entries, I came upon one that really made me smile. A student wrote, "We took my cat to the vet. He fixed her claws and took out her spades."

Leslie Wilde
Ketchum, Idaho

A couple of fifth grade girls came into my art room asking for some yarn for a project they were doing in homeroom.

As they were leaving, I asked about the project. "We're making a diaphragm," one girl answered.

"Don't you mean a diorama?" I asked. "Yeah, that's it," she replied.

I giggled to myself about that the rest of the day.

Becky Brandt
Clear Lake, Iowa

One day in the sewing room, a seventh grade boy said, "That sucks." Well, I don't allow that kind of language in my room, so I informed the student that he would have to stay after school for detention.

After school I called his home to let his mother know that her son had received a detention that day for using improper language. She said to me, "Well, that sucks. What did he say?" I told her he had said, "That sucks."

There was dead silence on the phone, then, "He will be sure to serve the detention." Click.

Sharon Pollock
South Lyon, Michigan

Time for A Real Job?

Because he consistently talked out of turn, I asked one of my seventh graders to write an essay explaining why it is important not to talk while I teach. After beginning with the expected, "If she let us get away with talking all the time, we wouldn't get anything done," he wrote, "If we want to talk all day, we should grow up and get a teaching job."

Barbara Swier
Turlock, California

My class was discussing the weather one morning. A student said it was raining when she came to school. I looked out the window and I said, "It wasn't raining when I came to work this morning."

Another student raised his hand and said, "Mrs. Hyatt, where do you work? I didn't know you had a job."

Joan Hyatt
Buffalo, New York

I was telling my second grade students that they would have a substitute the next day because I had to attend a professional meeting. One of my students raised his hand and asked, "Will our substitute be a teacher, or will it be a real person?"

Carolyn Baumgardner
Kingwood, West Virginia

"I'm in middle school. I guess that's why I always get in the middle of everything."

During a current events discussion, my seventh grade class and I talked about the conflict between Palestine and Israel and the dispute over the West Bank. My students identified Palestine, Israel, and the West Bank on a map. After about 20 minutes of discussion, one of the students raised his hand and asked, "Are all of these problems over a bank?"

Barbara Poland
Ramsey, New Jersey

I'm a tutor for grades K-1. One of my first grade boys wanted to know if I was a teacher. I said I wasn't and explained I was a tutor. He had the funniest look on his face, then blurted out, "No you're not. I think that you smell just fine!"

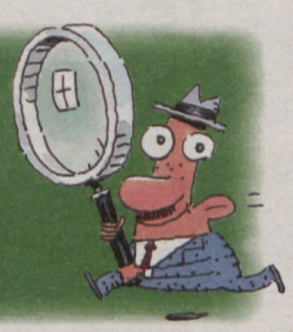
Jeanine Layland
Dillingham, Alaska

Got Laughs?

- **Have a funny school story, anecdote, or vignette you'd like to share with other NEA members? You can send contributions to "In the Light Lane," NEA Today, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036. Fax: 202/822-7206. Send E-mail to neatoday@nea.org.**
- **Want a classroom chuckle delivered to your E-mail box once a week? Subscribe to the new "In the Light Lane" mailing list. Just send an E-mail to join-lightlane@list.nea.org (no subject or message needed).**

Focus on Finance

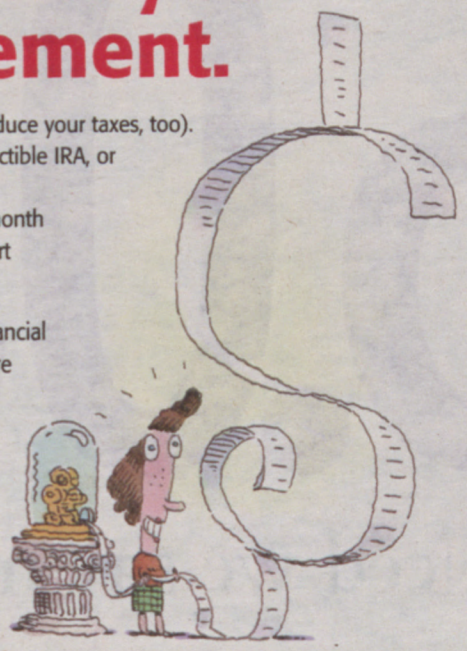
Information and helpful tips on managing your money – brought to you by NEA Member Benefits.



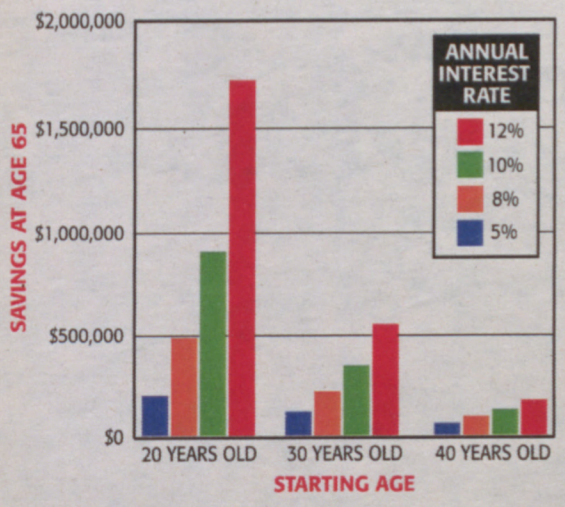
Three ways to fatten your nest egg for retirement.

1. Fund your pension plan the maximum amount every year (it will reduce your taxes, too).
2. Open an IRA – put up to $2000 annually into a traditional, tax deductible IRA, or take advantage of the new Roth IRA to avoid future taxes.
3. Set a concrete savings goal and stick to it – even if it's just $100 a month automatically deposited from your paycheck into a mutual fund. Start now, whatever your age!

Talk to your employer, your bank, your professional association or a financial advisor about how much you'll need and what you have to do to secure your retirement. Ask questions – your future is in your hands!



Retire in style: look at what saving just $100 a month can do!



Make a Money Market account your financial fitness center.

If you have extra savings, even emergency or vacation money which you don't want to tie up in investments, consider opening a Money Market account. You'll give your money a workout!

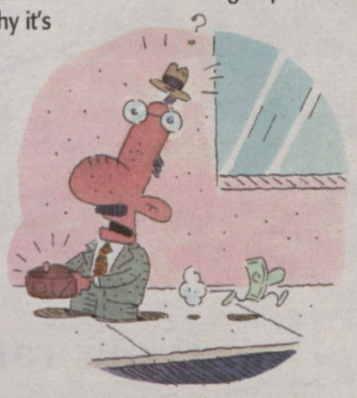
Compared to your regular checking or savings account where your money sits around making low or no interest, your money will be actively earning you interest at a higher rate – often as much as 5%. You can deposit or withdraw whenever you need to, or leave it alone and watch it build itself up. For flexibility and low-risk short-term interest rates, Money Market accounts are a great way to keep your finances in shape.

Check out this deal!

Instead of spending $15 or more on bank-issued checks, order from an independent printer for 40-65% less! Search the internet for "inexpensive checks."

Choose and use your credit card carefully.

When considering a credit card, don't just look at interest rates. Many credit card issuers have started to introduce high penalties that can be expensive for consumers and could push some further into debt. Consumer interest groups have even asked Congress for more protective laws to regulate these changes. That's why it's more important than ever to choose a credit card carefully and use it wisely.



Penalty rates: some cards now impose strict payment conditions that could increase your Annual Percentage Rate (APR) to as much as 22.99%, if just two payments are late. Late can now mean just one day.

Shortened "grace periods" and "leniency periods": on many cards the old 25-day grace period has been shortened to 20 days, and late fees are now often imposed immediately – don't let that payment check be late!

Higher fees and rates on cash advances: you may be paying a minimum fee of $5 or 3% of the amount of your cash advance, as well as a high rate of around 20%, which starts accruing interest immediately.

Read the fine print when selecting a credit card – it could save you money!

Savvy Survey – Are you an informed consumer?

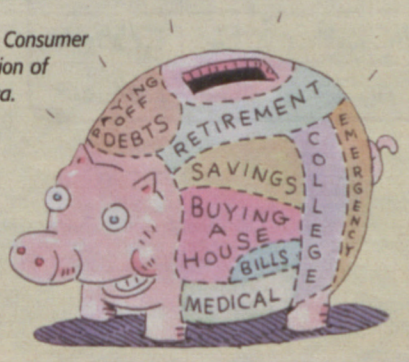
Take this short quiz and check your results against the national average.

1. It is always wise to purchase car rental insurance.
   ❍ True ❍ False
2. Most consumers should not purchase a whole life insurance policy unless they plan to hold it for at least 15 years.
   ❍ True ❍ False
3. All savings and investment products sold by banks are federally (FDIC) insured. ❍ True ❍ False

Answers – and the percentage of people surveyed who answered correctly:

1. False 54% - this expensive form of insurance is often redundant – check if you are covered by your own car insurance or credit card.
2. True 66% - if you cancel a whole life policy after just a few years your life insurance costs can double. Buy term life insurance if you want economical insurance protection and not a long term savings and investment product.
3. False 66% - many stocks, mutual funds and insurance policies now sold by banks are not government insured – always ask.

Source: Consumer Federation of America.



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The stock market has historically provided the greatest return on long-term growth investment, and stock mutual funds have been turning in stellar performances the last several years. Don't be scared off by the high initial investment some funds require, minimum deposits are often waived if you set up automatic monthly deductions from your bank account.

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Check out these web sites for all kinds of valuable information:

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National Center for Financial Education: a non-profit organization dedicated to helping people plan for their financial future – www.ncfe.org

Consumer Credit Counseling Service: a non-profit service organization designed to help people get out of debt – www.credit.org

For more information on investment strategies and financial services for you and your family, visit our Web Site or call NEA Member Benefits at 1-800-637-4636.

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**All other bank rates in the comparison chart are accurate as of 8/4/99, based on a $2,500 minimum opening deposit and rates may be higher for higher balances. Source – *BISYS Research Services*, 8/4/99.

†Eligible NEA family members include parents, spouse, domestic partner and children.

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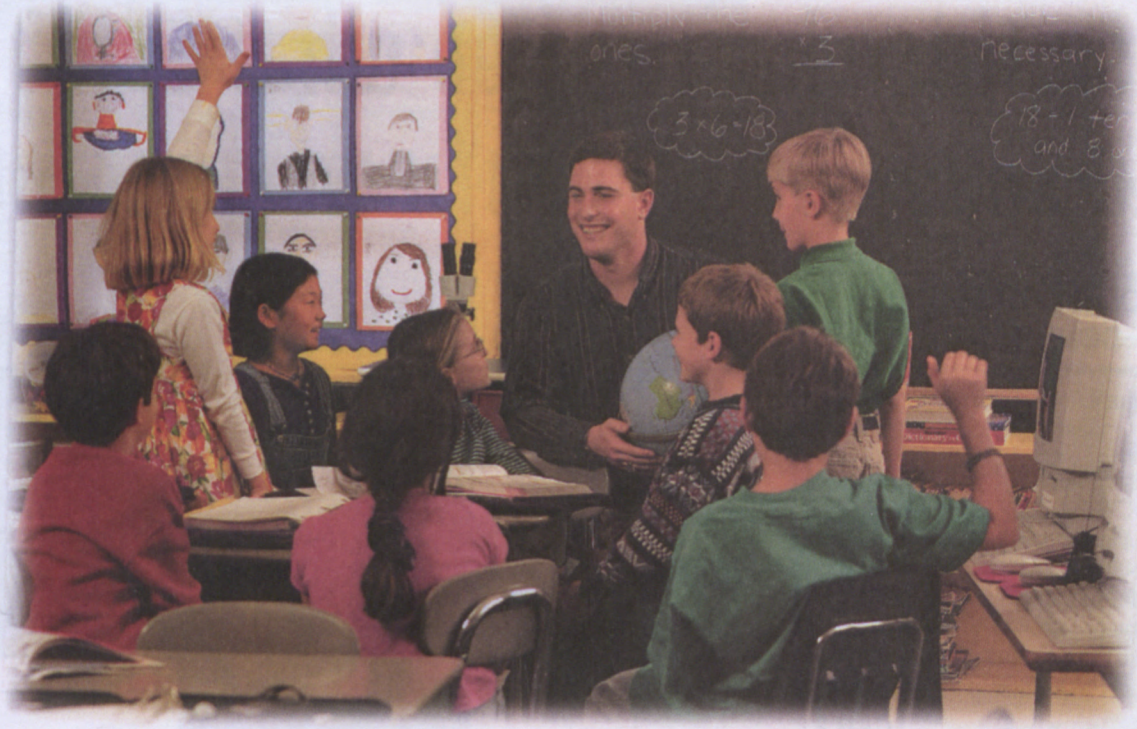

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	CAR 2			
Uninsured Motorists: _____ Per Person _____ Per Occurrence _____ Property Damage	CAR 1			
	CAR 2			
Comprehensive (Your Car): _____ Deductible	CAR 1			
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Collision (Your Car): _____ Deductible	CAR 1			
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